THE Hollywood REPORTER

January 5, 2023

‘YOU HAVE TO HAVE A NEED’

THR’S DIRECTOR ROUNDTABLE WITH ALEJANDRO G. IÑÁRRITU, JOSEPH KOSINSKI, GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD, SARAH POLLEY, TODD FIELD AND JD DILLARD

•

100 YEARS OF DISNEY

•

BOX OFFICE BLUES

HOW HOLLYWOOD DID IN 2022 … AND PREDICTIONS FOR 2023

INSIDE HBO’S ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE PLAN

CAN *THE LAST OF US*, STARRING BELLA RAMSEY AND PEDRO PASCAL, REINVENT A GENRE TO BECOME TV’S NEXT MONSTER HIT?

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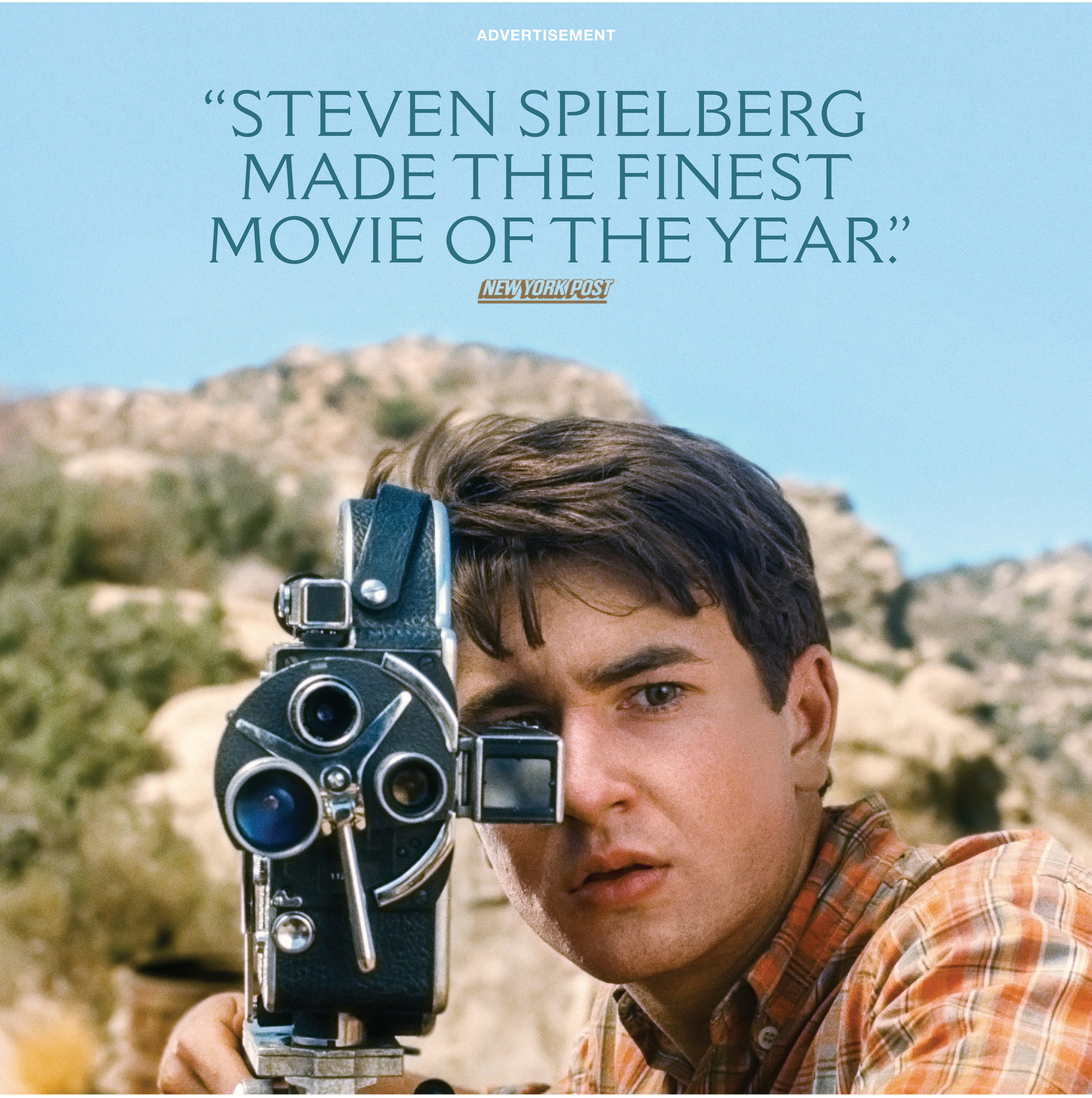
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FEATURES

34
‘We Put All of Ourselves Into This’
Can HBO’s elevated zombie drama *The Last of Us*, starring Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey, overcome Hollywood’s streak of bad video game adaptations to become the network’s next monster hit?

40
‘You Have to Have a Need’
On the *THR* Director Roundtable, the year’s top helmers swap trade secrets — including how Tom Cruise greenlit *Top Gun: Maverick*, taking a chance on actors who are bad at auditions and the lengths these directors will go, including self-financing.

46
100 Years of Disney
A century after brothers Walt and Roy O. Disney signed their first contract to make cartoon shorts, The Walt Disney Co. conglomerate kicks off a global tour celebrating its cultural feats from *Snow White* to Marvel, Disneyland and *Star Wars*.

50
Anatomy of a Contender: *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*
Writer-director Rian Johnson took the second Benoit Blanc film to Greece with a new cast and a fresh murder for Daniel Craig’s detective to solve.

54
‘Like Tom Cruise, He Does His Own Stunts’
Polish writer-director Jerzy Skolimowski and writing partner Ewa Piaskowska rave about the donkey actors they worked with on the set of their Oscar-shortlisted film, *EO*.

“I seriously considered that maybe I don’t want to be famous so I’m not going to do this show,” says Bella Ramsey. She and *The Last of Us* co-star Pedro Pascal were photographed Dec. 6 at Dust Studios in L.A.

On Pascal: Saint Laurent coat, Dolce & Gabbana shirt, trousers and boots.

On Ramsey: Margiela top, Simone Rocha pants, Grenson shoes.

Photographed here and for the cover by **Ryan Pfluger**

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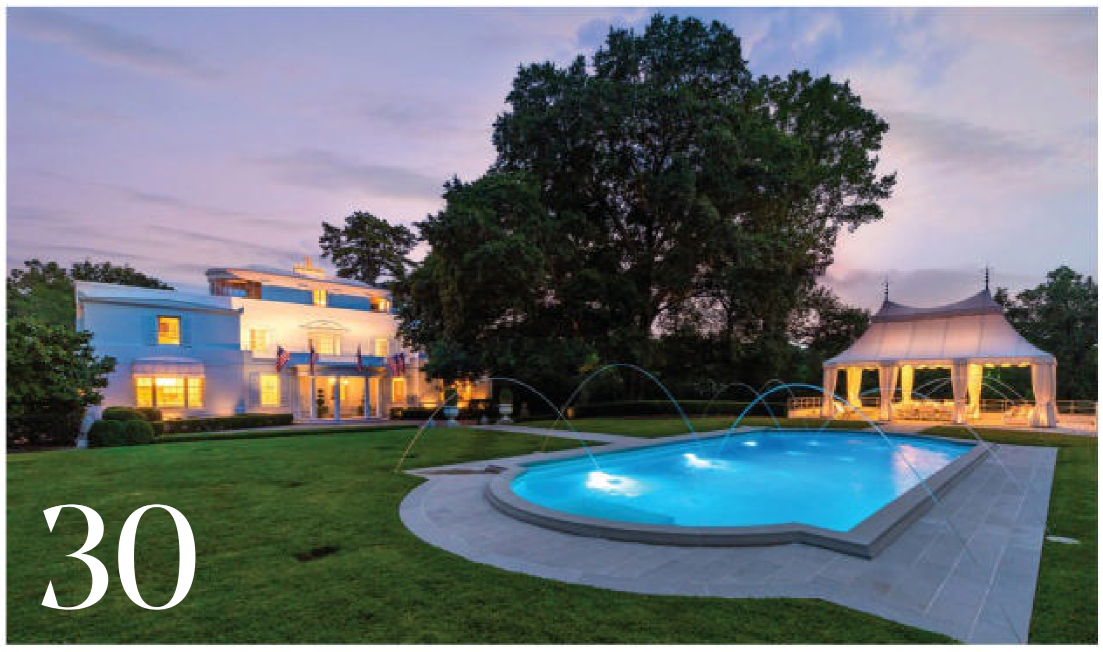

THE REPORT

7 'There's Still Not Enough Titles for 2023'
After missing pre-pandemic box office levels by a wide mark last year, studio insiders are concerned that the movie pipeline has yet to return to normal.

10 Hollywood's Technologists Forecast 2023 Challenges
As CES kicks off, studio engineers are working to advance 8K TV content, make Filmmaker Mode standard and move toward a unified metaverse.

ABOUT TOWN

16 Person of Interest: Lucy Boynton
The *Bohemian Rhapsody* breakout star goes darker in *The Pale Blue Eye*.

17 Where Hollywood Vacationed Over the Holidays
Stars headed to getaways like St. Barts, Cabo and Aspen and journeyed to such far-flung spots as the Andes and Easter Island: "This might be the best place on earth!" posted Molly Sims of Costa Rica.

22 Hitched, Hatched, Hired

THE BUSINESS

24 Creative Space: Peter Berg
The filmmaker talks about a different kind of football doc, following Rihanna with a camera for six years and lessons from roommates who forged their own wildly successful Hollywood paths.

26 Can *Babylon* Bounce Back From a Box Office Bomb?
Critics and audiences are mixed on Damien Chazelle's three-hour ode to Old Hollywood excess, but its awards chances aren't dead yet.

28 The Sound Race (Really) Mixes It Up
Among the movies that made the Oscar shortlist for best sound are an animated pic, a documentary, an international feature, musical films and tentpoles.

STYLE

30 Inside Atlanta's Booming Home Market
Real estate prices have increased 10 percent year-over-year in Georgia's biggest city as film and television spending hit a record high.

32 Red Carpet Relaxes With New Zegna
The Hollywood-loved Italian luxury menswear house, led by artistic director Alessandro Sartori, launches a VIP collection featuring soft fabrics inspired by leisurewear.

REVIEWS

60 *Mayfair Witches*
AMC's sumptuous but exasperating Anne Rice series stars Alexandra Daddario as a doctor who descends from a long line of magic-wielding women.

62 *Night Court*
John Larroquette is back before the bench in NBC's highly erratic reboot of the Emmy-winning '80s sitcom.

THR INSIDER

65 A New Era for the Golden Globes?
The telecast, in its final year on NBC, is auditioning for its future.

66 'We Knew We Weren't Going to Alter History'
Palm Springs Film Fest opener *80 for Brady* brings Super Bowl LI to the big screen.

24
"When I get comfortable with someone, or form a real friendship, I can work better. I can be more honest," says Peter Berg. He was photographed Dec. 9 at the West L.A. offices of Film Forties.

30
This 1937 residence in the exclusive Atlanta neighborhood of Buckhead sits on more than 4 acres.

46
Walt Disney struck gold in 1928 when the cartoon *Steamboat Willie*, starring Mickey Mouse, became an overnight sensation.

Photographed by **Maggie Shannon**

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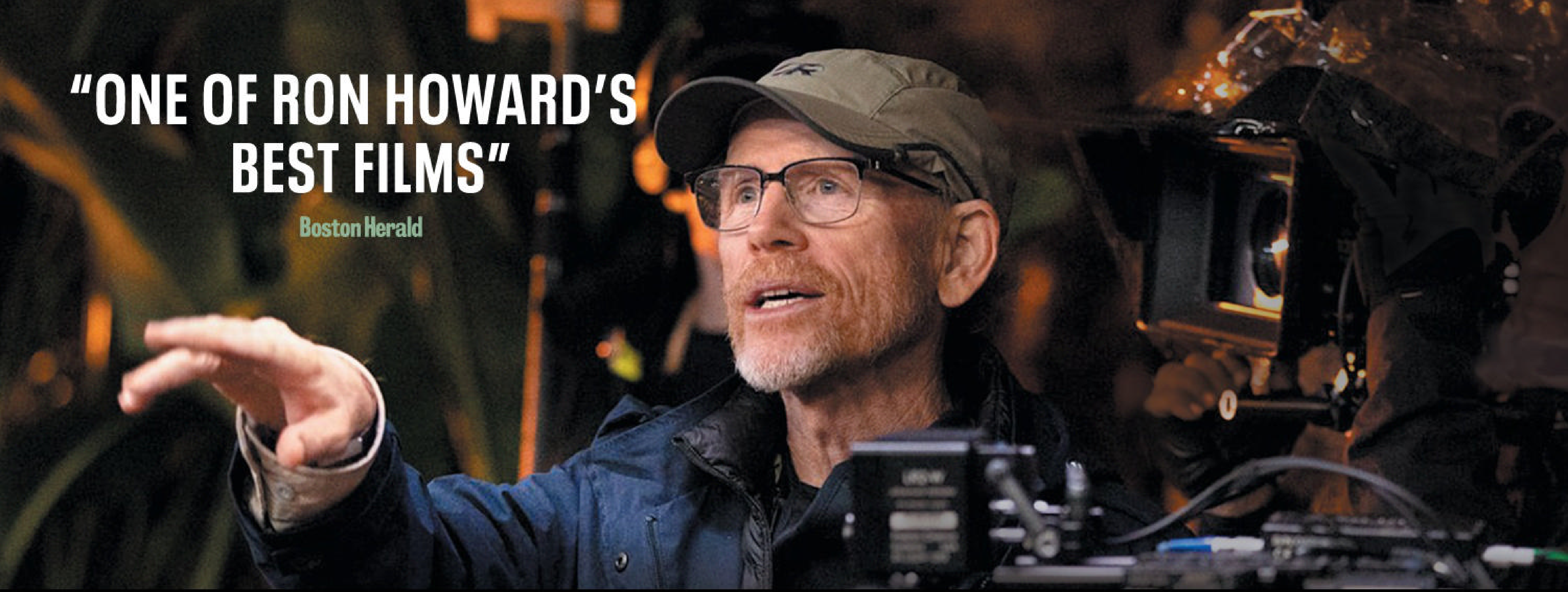

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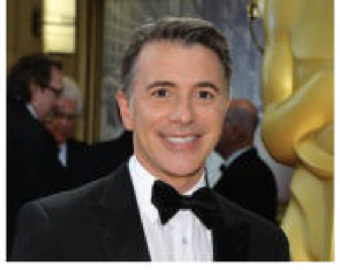


↑ Deals

Strauss' Next Sell

Veteran Disney marketer joins Apple TV+ **p. 14**

CES

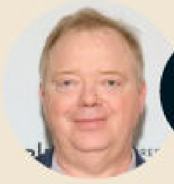
2023 in Focus

Hollywood's technologists offer forecasts **p. 10**

Heat Index

Jeremy Zimmer
The UTA chief is on an acquisition tear, buying boutique literary agency Fletcher & Co. to gain a bigger foothold in the market for top authors.

Adam Aron
As AMC Theatres stock declines, the CEO pledges to freeze top exec salaries and to not sell anymore shares "anytime soon" in an attempt to win back retail investors.



Anthony Wood
Wall Street initially greets Roku's plan to manufacture its own TV line — starting in the spring — with optimism as the company halts a stock slide.

Jantje Friese, Baran bo Odar
The *Dark* creators took a swing with *1899*, but plans for a second and third season were cut short when Netflix canceled the drama after an eight-episode run.

Showbiz Stocks

↑ **$309.41** (+9.7%)
NETFLIX (NFLX)
Despite reports its ad tier was off to a slow start, the streamer was upgraded from sell to buy by CFRA, citing an attractive price point, and significant upside.

↓ **$229.10** (-3.3%)
MICROSOFT (MSFT)
The tech giant was downgraded by UBS over concerns related to its cloud business, while its Activision megadeal prepares to go to trial.

Dec. 28-Jan. 4

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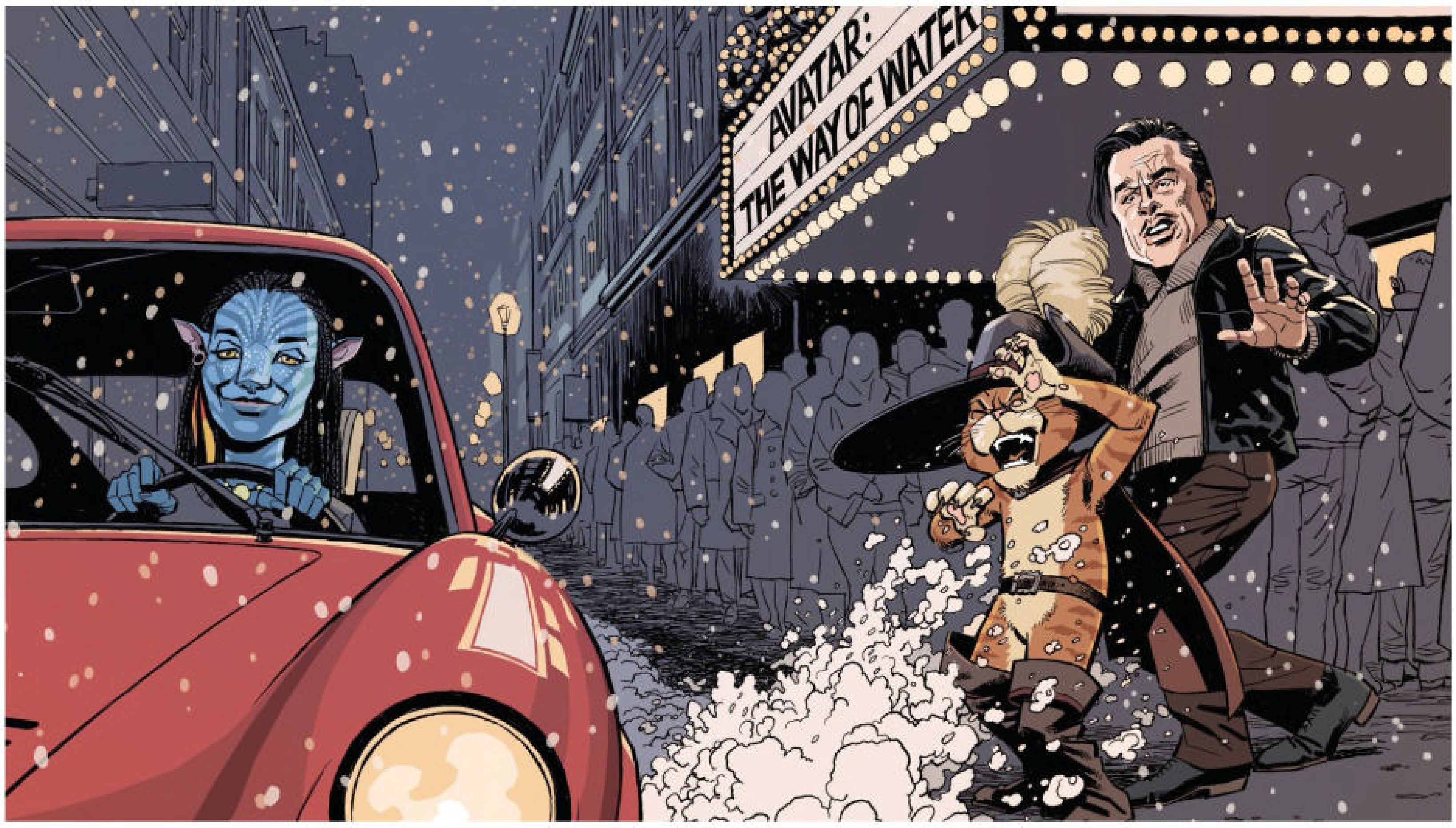

AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER

Box Office 2022: A Lucky Few Prosper, Tough Times for the Rest

Top Gun: Maverick and *Avatar: The Way of Water* lead a theatrical landscape reliant on tentpoles alone as insiders fear the movie pipeline has yet to return to normal and distributors grapple with the impact of COVID-era production delays

BY PAMELA MCCLINTOCK

The ups and downs at the 2022 box office were certainly dramatic.

Recovery from the COVID-19 crisis was in full swing during the summer, only to crash in the fall. There were high hopes for the year-end holidays, but the merriment didn't quite materialize outside of *Avatar: The Way of Water* and *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever.* Throughout the pandemic era, such films have fared the best because they appeal to a broad swath of people, including those between the ages of 18 and 34, who were the most likely to return to the cinema.

Families and older adults, however, may have become more discerning in terms of how they spend their leisure time — and money. Animated films, once a bankable staple for Hollywood, kept facing headwinds in 2022. And the marketplace for adult-skewing titles remained uneven at best. Some worked — *Elvis*, *Where the Crawdads Sing*, *Ticket to Paradise* and *The Lost City* — while others were quickly shown the door: *Babylon*, *She Said* and *Don't Worry Darling*.

2022 Global Box Office Report

An underlying issue was a lack of product. The movie pipeline has yet to return to normal as studios and other film distributors continue to grapple with production and postproduction delays due to COVID-19 (by all accounts, special effects houses are stretched to their limit). As a result, the calendar was sparse for stretches at a time in terms of all-audience fare.

While there are plenty of big titles in 2023, there is a lack of product during certain times, prompting B. Riley Securities analyst **Eric Wold** to lower his domestic box office forecast for 2023 from $9.5 billion to $8.9 billion (he's very bullish). Adds analyst **Eric Handler** of MKM Partners: "2022 showed us that people are willing to come back to the cinema, especially for blockbusters and event films. There just wasn't enough of them. The

The Year's Global Box Office in Review

North American grosses rose last year, but they were still off 34 percent from 2019, when receipts totaled $11.4 billion. The big question now is what 2023 will bring in terms of moviegoing

Box office	Domestic	International	Global
2022	$7.5B	$18.2B	$25.7B
2021	$4.5B	$15.5B	$20B
Increase from 2021	↑66.7%	↑17.4%	↑28.4%

Sources: Comscore., Gower Street

Illustration by **Læmeur**

number of wide releases was down 35 percent from pre-pandemic times." Handler projects a 10 percent bump in domestic revenue in 2023, to $8.1 billion. One studio executive, speaking to *THR*, notes that the concern is "about the quality of the movies and differentiating what you see at home from the big-screen experience."

When business was at its busiest in June and July, domestic box office revenue was down just 14 or 15 percent from 2019, the year before the COVID-19 crisis struck. But, at times last year, revenue was down as much as 40 percent from 2019.

Christmas in particular was brutal, even as **James Cameron**'s *Avatar: The Way of Water* sprinted past the $1.4 billion mark at the worldwide box office by the end of the long New Year's weekend. DreamWorks Animation's *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* was the latest animated offering to disappoint (Illumination and Universal's *Minions: The Rise of Gru* was the only animated tentpole of 2022 to really work in theaters). And Paramount watched **Damien Chazelle**'s *Babylon*, budgeted at $78 million, bomb after an otherwise stellar year for the studio. "You can't underestimate the overall value of animated films to the box office. Without them, it leaves a big hole," notes a studio insider. "I make the same argument for adult dramas and comedies. Without a breadth of titles, exhibition is lost."

Adds a top distributor: "I don't think we'll know the state of the box office recovery until we have a more robust release calendar. There's still not enough titles in 2023." THR

What's Hot vs. What's Not

WINNERS

↑ SANDRA BULLOCK
The Lost City faced plenty of hurdles. Not only are romantic comedies an endangered species, but older females are a difficult demo to reach. Yet it grossed an impressive $190 million globally. Domestically, it even came in ahead of **Brad Pitt**'s *Bullet Train*.

MICHELLE YEOH
The actress was the toast of 2022 after starring in the staggering success that was *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, which single-handedly proved that there is still a place at the box office for indie films. Yeoh also had a voice role in *Minions: The Rise of Gru*, last year's biggest animated film.

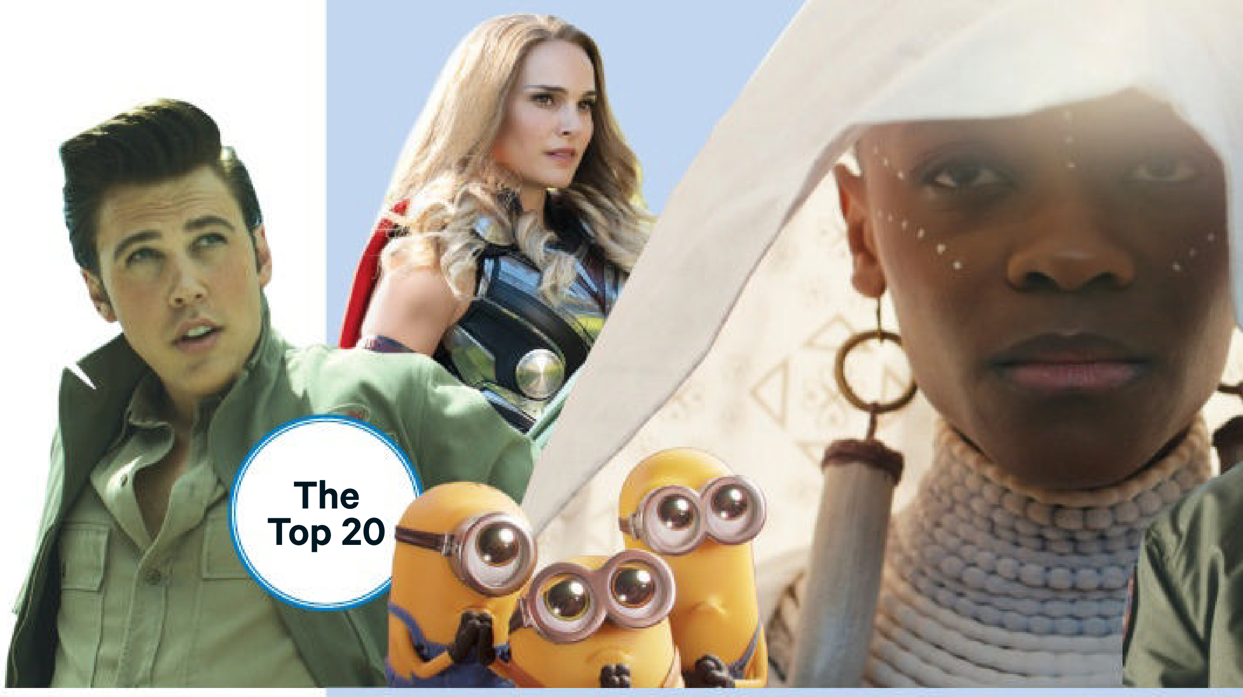
TOM CRUISE
There was no stopping *Top Gun: Maverick*, which now ranks as **Tom Cruise**'s top-grossing film with $1.49 billion in global ticket sales (it's also the first time one of his movies has cracked the $1 billion mark). The *Top Gun* sequel was a slow burn, playing in theaters for months.

LOSERS

DWAYNE JOHNSON
At a time when superhero fare is all the rage, Johnson starrer *Black Adam* topped out at an unimpressive $391.5 million in worldwide ticket sales. The popular actor had intended to launch a franchise for DC and Warner Bros., but it wasn't to be, with Johnson and Warners just parting ways.

DAVID O. RUSSELL
The director's latest film, *Amsterdam*, was a bust despite a star-packed cast led by **Christian Bale**, **Margot Robbie** and **John David Washington**. The comedy thriller, about a political conspiracy, barely got to $30 million at the global box office, including $15 million in the U.S.

↑ DAMIEN CHAZELLE
Like David O. Russell, the *La La Land* director recently suffered a major miss. His *Babylon* bombed in its debut over Christmas in what will be a multimillion-dollar flop for Paramount. The two movies also have Margot Robbie in common. And both cost $80 million to make before marketing.



Matt Reeves' *The Batman*, starring **Robert Pattinson**, was a needed hit for Warner Bros. So was the studio's biopic *Elvis*, which was the most successful adult-skewing title of the year. **Austin Butler** plays the iconic **Elvis Presley**.

The performance of the **J.K. Rowling** spinoff means that there likely won't be a fourth *Fantastic Beasts* movie, even as Warner Bros. hopes to revive the *Harry Potter* franchise.

The Bad Guys was among a string of solid hits for Universal. The CGI pic did big business in China, where it grossed nearly $50 million, while most Hollywood pics were shut out.

Rank	Title STUDIO	Release date
1	*Top Gun: Maverick* PARAMOUNT	May 27
2	*Avatar: The Way of Water** 20TH CENTURY	Dec. 16
3	*Jurassic World: Dominion* UNIVERSAL	June 10
4	*Doctor Strange in the Multiverse ...* MARVEL	May 6
5	*Minions: The Rise of Gru* UNIVERSAL	July 1
6	*Black Panther: Wakanda Forever** MARVEL	Nov. 11
7	*The Batman* WARNER BROS.	March 4
8	*Thor: Love and Thunder* MARVEL	July 8
9	*The Battle at Lake Changjin II* BONA	Feb. 1
10	*Moon Man* MAHUA FUNAGE	July 29
11	*Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets* WARNER BROS.	April 15
12	*Sonic the Hedgehog 2* PARAMOUNT	April 8
13	*Uncharted* SONY	Feb. 18
14	*Black Adam* WARNER BROS.	Oct. 21
15	*Elvis* WARNER BROS.	June 24
16	*The Bad Guys* UNIVERSAL	April 22
17	*Bullet Train* SONY	Aug. 5
18	*Lightyear* PIXAR	June 17
19	*Too Cool to Kill* WELL GO (USA)	Feb. 1
20	*Smile* PARAMOUNT	Sept. 30

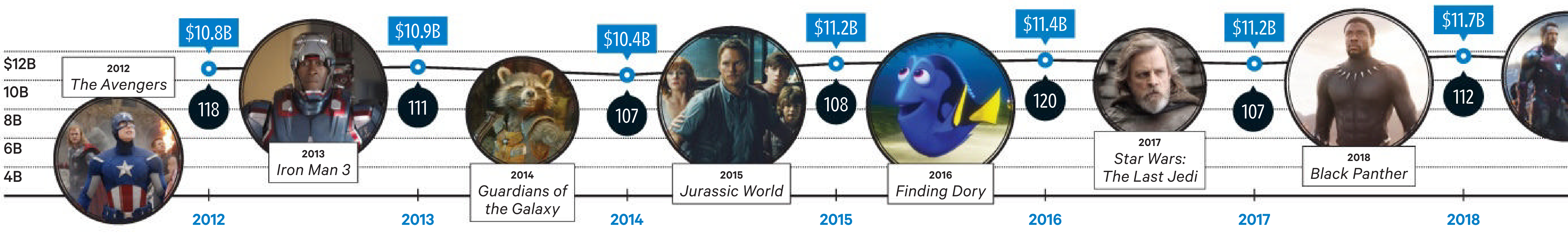
DOMESTIC REVENUE: STEADY, THEN NOT Hollywood is resigned to the fact that the box office recovery is far from over

# of wide releases (opening in over 2,000 locations)

2012 A mega slate of tentpoles — from *The Avengers* to *The Dark Knight Rises* to *Twilight* and *Hunger Games* installments — resulted in combined ticket sales hitting a new record.

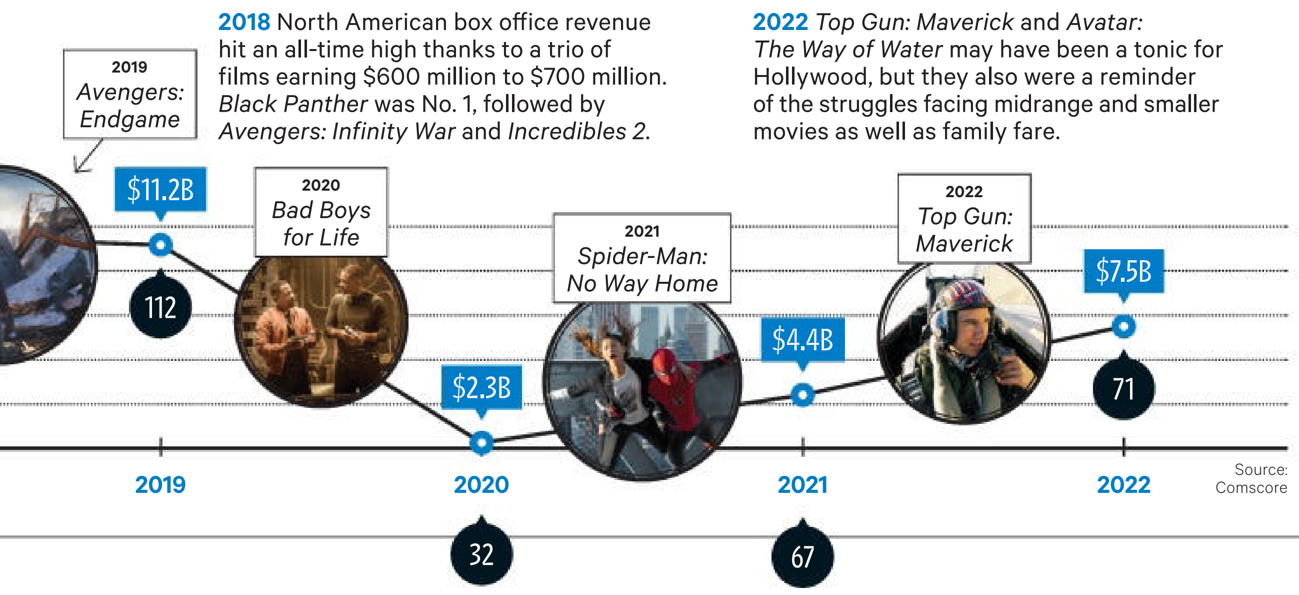
2014 Domestic revenue dipped when no event pic grossed $350 million or more at the domestic box office. *Guardians of the Galaxy*, introducing a new team of heroes, led with $333 million.

2016 Combined ticket sales clocked in at more than $11 billion for the second year in a row. *Finding Dory* swam to the top of the domestic chart with an impressive $486 million.



Estimated budget	Rotten Tomatoes %	Domestic gross	% of total	Foreign gross	% of total	Global gross
$170M	96%	$718.7M	48.3%	$770M	51.7%	$1.48B
$350M-$400M	77%	$446.9M	31%	$997M	69%	$1.44B
$165M-$185M	29%	$376.8M	37.6%	$625.1M	62.4%	$1B
$200M	74%	$411.3M	43%	$544.4M	57%	$955.7M
$80M	70%	$369.6M	39.3%	$569.9M	60.7%	$939.6M
$250M	84%	$439.9M	53.5%	$381.7M	46.5%	$821.7M
$185M-$200M	85%	$369.3M	47.9%	$401.4M	52.1%	$770.8M
$250M	64%	$343.2M	45.1%	$417.6M	54.9%	$760.9M
$200M	N/A	$117.3K	<0.1%	$626.4M	100%	$626.5M
N/A	N/A	-	0%	$460.2M	100%	$460.2M
$200M	46%	$95.8M	23.7%	$309.3M	76.3%	$405.1M
$90M-$110M	69%	$190.8M	47.4%	$211.7M	52.6%	$402.6M
$120M	41%	$148.6M	37%	$253.1M	63%	$401.7M
$230M	39%	$168.1M	42.9%	$223.4M	57.1%	$391.5M
$85M	77%	$151M	52.8%	$135M	47.2%	$286M
$70M-$80M	88%	$97.2M	38.9%	$152.9M	61.1%	$250.1M
$90M	54%	$103.3M	43.2%	$135.9M	56.8%	$239.2M
$200M	74%	$118.3M	52.2%	$108.1M	47.8%	$226.4M
N/A	N/A	$185K	<0.1%	$217.1M	99.9%	$217.2M
$17M	80%	$105.9M	49%	$110.2M	51%	$216.1M

Source: Comscore, Jan. 1, 2021-Jan. 2, 2022. *Still in release.



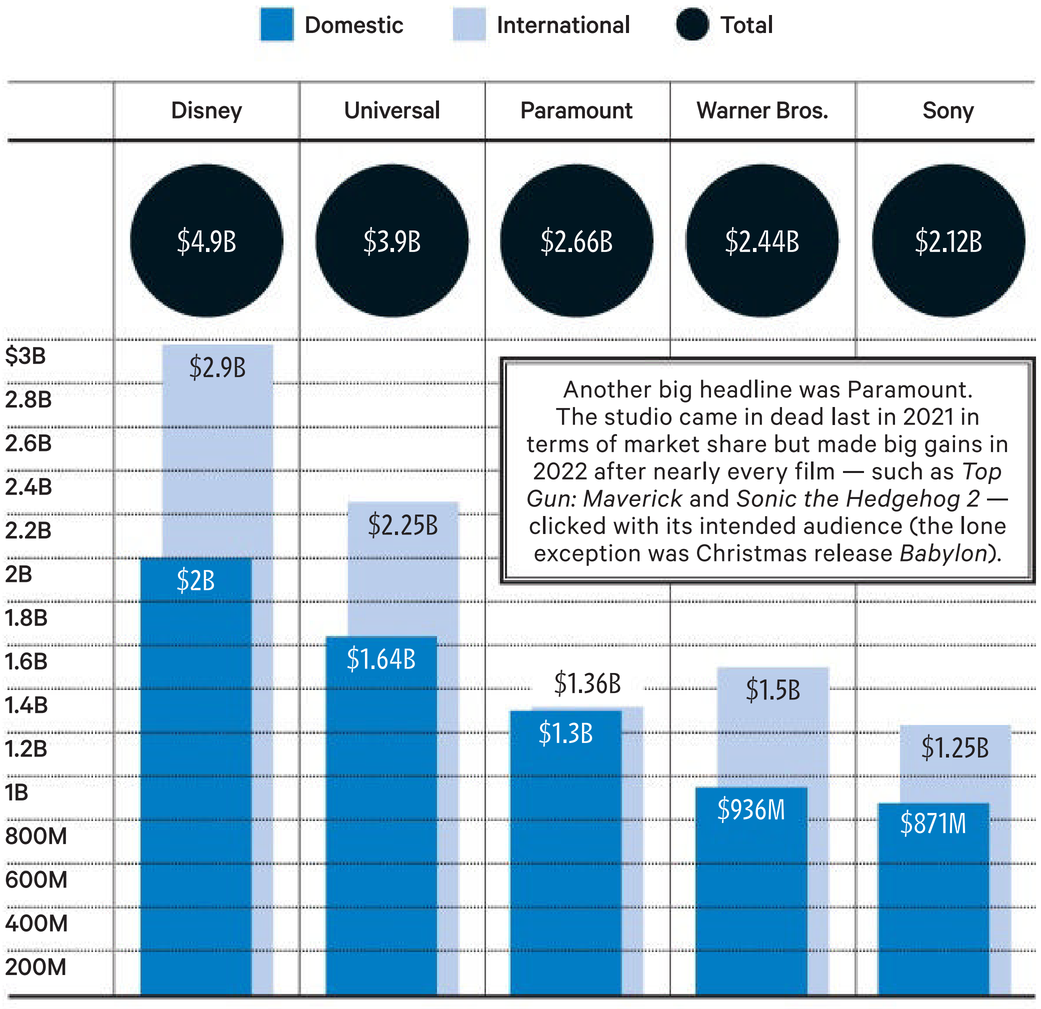
2018 North American box office revenue hit an all-time high thanks to a trio of films earning $600 million to $700 million. *Black Panther* was No. 1, followed by *Avengers: Infinity War* and *Incredibles 2*.

2022 *Top Gun: Maverick* and *Avatar: The Way of Water* may have been a tonic for Hollywood, but they also were a reminder of the struggles facing midrange and smaller movies as well as family fare.

Source: Comscore

STUDIO REVENUE SNAPSHOT Universal Tries to Catch Disney

Under Donna Langley's leadership, Universal's film empire — including Focus Features, Illumination and DreamWorks Animation — released 40 titles of all shapes and sizes, far more than its rivals. Disney ultimately kept its long-running lead in terms of market share, capped by *Avatar: The Way of Water*



Another big headline was Paramount. The studio came in dead last in 2021 in terms of market share but made big gains in 2022 after nearly every film — such as *Top Gun: Maverick* and *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* — clicked with its intended audience (the lone exception was Christmas release *Babylon*).

Source: Studios, *THR* research

SPECIALTY RECAP
Everything or Nothing

Even Steven Spielberg found the going tough when platforming *The Fabelmans* at the specialty box office

1	↑ ***Everything Everywhere All at Once*** A24 (APRIL 15)	$70M
2	***The Fabelmans**** UNIVERSAL (NOV. 11)	$11.8M
3	***Bodies Bodies Bodies*** (A24, NOV. 19)	$11.4M
4	***Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris*** FOCUS (JULY 5)	$10.4M
5	***The Banshees of Inisherin**** SEARCHLIGHT (OCT. 21)	$9.1M
6	***Till*** MGM/UAR (OCT. 14)	$9M
7	***Bones and All**** MGM/UAR (NOV. 18)	$7.8M
8	***Marcel the Shell With Shoes On*** A24 (JUNE 24)	$6.3M
9	***Tár*** FOCUS (OCT. 7)	$5.6M
10	***The Whale**** A24 (DEC. 9)	$5.3M

Source: Comscore. *Still in release.

Everything Everywhere All at Once did mind-bending business at the North American box office, earning $68.6 million domestically after its March release to rank as the top-grossing specialty film since *La La Land* in 2017.

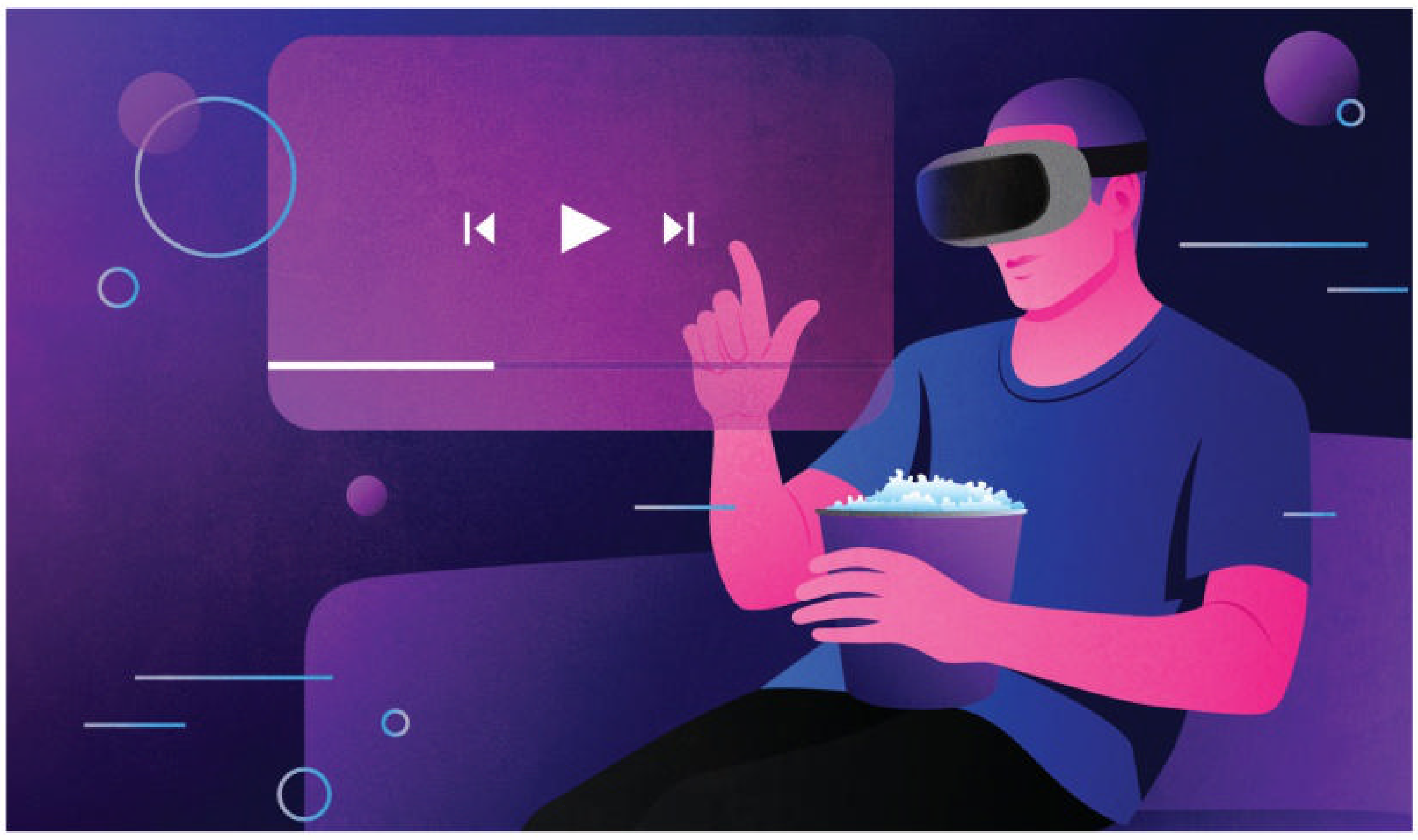
Otherwise, most specialty films released last year weren't able to break out. That includes **Steven Spielberg**'s critically acclaimed film *The Fabelmans*, which opted to platform slowly in hopes of building word-of-mouth throughout awards season (platforming long has been the purview of art house fare).

The plan didn't work. Through Jan. 2, *The Fabelmans* had earned just shy of $12 million at the domestic box office since its early November release, making it the lowest-grossing film directed by Spielberg since his first film, *The Sugarland Express* (1974), which topped out at $7 million domestically, not adjusted for inflation.

Todd Field's *Tár*, which also has major awards ambitions, likewise stalled at the box office despite rave reviews and early talk of an Oscar for **Cate Blanchett**. Focus Features is home to the film.

Tár, which cost at least $35 million to produce and market, has grossed just $5.6 million in North America. *The Fabelmans* cost $40 million to produce. The budget for *Everything Everywhere* was far more modest, at $14 million. — P.M.

ELVIS, BEASTS: COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. *THOR, PANTHER* (2), *STRANGE*: COURTESY OF MARVEL STUDIOS. *GRU*: COURTESY OF ILLUMINATION ENTERTAINMENT/UNIVERSAL PICTURES. *MAVERICK*: COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES (2). *JURASSIC*: COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES. *SONIC*: COURTESY PARAMOUNT PICTURES/SEGA OF AMERICA. *EVERYTHING*: ALLYSON RIGGS/A24. *BATMAN*: JONATHAN OLLEY/WARNER BROS. *BAD*: COURTESY OF DREAMWORKS ANIMATION/UNIVERSAL PICTURES. BULLOCK: KARWAI TANG/WIREIMAGE. CHAZELLE: STEVE GRANITZ/FILMMAGIC. *AVENGERS, IRON, GUARDIANS, DORY*: WALT DISNEY STUDIOS MOTION PICTURES/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION. *JURASSIC*: CHUCK ZLOTNICK/UNIVERSAL PICTURES/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION. *JEDI*: JOHN WILSON/WALT DISNEY STUDIOS MOTION PICTURES/LUCASFILM LTD/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION. *ENDGAME*: MARVEL STUDIOS/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION. *BOYS*: BEN ROTHSTEIN/COLUMBIA PICTURES/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION. *SPIDER-MAN*: MATT KENNEDY/SONY PICTURES RELEASING/MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION.



Hollywood's Technologists Forecast 2023's Challenges

As CES kicks off, studio engineering leaders are working to make Filmmaker Mode standard and move toward a unified metaverse

BY CAROLYN GIARDINA

The evolution of the metaverse, virtual reality and TV technology are just a few of the buzziest trends that will be on display at the 2023 CES Show, which gets underway Jan. 5 in Las Vegas. Organizers are hoping to reach 100,000 attendees, which is far below pre-COVID levels (the org reported 171,000 at its January 2020 show) but nevertheless would be a strong showing for a pandemic-era trade event. Speaking with *THR*, tech leaders at major studios outlined promising developments — like one day seeing *Avatar: The Way of Water* at home in a format as it's shown in theaters or having easier access to Filmmaker Mode on your TV to preserve the director's intent and remove the "reality TV"-like quality of high-def viewing — as well as incoming challenges (i.e., how the masses will embrace the metaverse) in 2023.

8K TVS POWER UP, BUT LACK CONTENT

It's been an evolutionary year in the TV space, but, citing advanced display tech such as miniLEDs and microLEDs, Warner Bros. vp emerging and creative technologies **Michael Zink** says that this year's lineup of TVs has "a lot more capabilities in expressing stories and bringing what you can really do in a theater all the way into the home." Expect to hear set makers touting features including high dynamic range, or HDR (a wider range between the blackest blacks and whitest whites in an image), and 8K (four times the resolution of 4K's horizontal display resolution of about 4,000 pixels). As to available features or series content, collectively, Hollywood has put far more energy into producing movies and shows in HDR than upping their resolution beyond 4K, and that doesn't seem to be changing. Still, knowledgeable observers point out that 8K TVs could offer other options. "Potentially an *Avatar* at 48 frames in 4K on an 8K set may be possible at some point," says **Bill Baggelaar**, exec vp and CTO at Sony Pictures, noting that "there are things we can do theatrically that we can't necessarily do in the home just yet."

Jenkins

Baggelaar

Zink

Where 8K is concerned, **Renard T. Jenkins** — senior vp production integration and creative technology services at Warner Bros. Discovery and the newly elected president of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) — sees opportunity in the virtual reality and game space on platforms like Meta's Oculus. "I think that's where 8K is really going to start to see a lot of use. I know for me, as a gamer, it does make a difference," Jenkins says. "I don't know how much will happen, but I do know there's a lot of work that's going on right now, and there are a lot of things that are in the hopper."

FILMMAKER MODE MAY BE CATCHING ON

A vital topic for many filmmakers as well as tech executives is the need to ensure that the director's creative intent is presented on television displays. These conversations have led to developments such as Filmmaker Mode, a TV setting that effectively disables post processing such as motion smoothing and aims to provide a cinematic representation of images in terms of color, contrast, aspect ratio and frame rates that avoids a visual quality likened to reality TV. The effort has earned the support of filmmakers including **Ava DuVernay**, **Ryan Coogler**, **Rian Johnson** and **Martin Scorsese**.

Filmmaker Mode was developed under the banner of the UHD Alliance, a coalition whose members include Hollywood studios and consumer electronics manufacturers, which is currently chaired by Warners exec Zink. The setting was introduced in 2019 and the focus is now on implementation and consumer education. "We have a lot more adopters that have joined over the last year," Zink says, citing Roku, JVC and Leica among the latest companies to unveil adoption plans, joining the likes of Samsung, LG and Panasonic. "One of the things we're hoping for is that it becomes one of those checkbox items. It's not something that manufacturers go out and tout as a differentiating feature, but instead it's something that just happens to be in every one of those manufactured products," he says. "I think we are getting very close to that." Companies that don't offer Filmmaker Mode still share the goal of preserving filmmakers' creative intent. For example, Sony provides similar technologies from Imax Enhanced in its custom settings.

BUT THE METAVERSE IS STILL A BIG QUESTION MARK

At CES, the promise of the metaverse is expected to be a big topic, though tech execs caution that its potential is far from being realized. "We don't really know what that means for entertainment yet. There are a lot of technical hurdles, let alone standards and other things [that need] to come together to create whatever that seamless sort of experience is. We have a ways to go on that," Sony exec Baggelaar says, adding, "You've got to have mass adoption, too. And that's hard." Warner Bros. Discovery exec Jenkins points out that many players — Roblox, Epic and Meta among them— are throwing their hats into the metaverse ring. "I think that one of the things that we have to keep in mind is that it's not going to be a single place. It's going to be a multiverse. Because you have so many players in this space right now, and so many different groups are trying to create an experience for their particular customer base," Jenkins elaborates, noting that "if you want to tie someone into your metaverse and only your metaverse, you're going to run into some of the problems that we're already seeing when it comes to the VR experience."

He believes that his organization, SMPTE, which is a standards-setting body, has a role to play in addressing these emerging spaces and helping consumers, with the goal "to make sure that as all these things start to be developed, that there's some sort of interoperability or some sort of common standard that's there to help you to be able to move from one experience to the next." THR

JENKINS: COURTESY OF SMPTE. ZINK: BRYAN STEFFY/GETTY IMAGES FOR UHD ALLIANCE. BAGGELAAR: COURTESY OF SONY. ILLO: ADOBE STOCK.

virgin atlantic

Flights, camera, action

Ready for take off

Our cabin crew bring personality to our personalized service. So whether you're stretching out in your private Upper Class suite, or enjoying a drink in our beautifully designed onboard social space, you'll have a great experience from Action to Cut.

See the world differently.

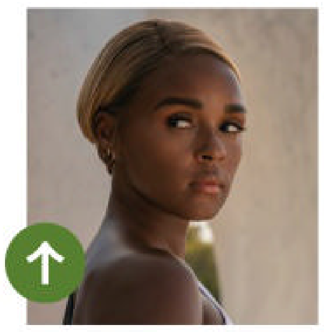
FEINBERG FORECAST

Which Oscar Hopefuls Got Presents and Which Got Coal for Christmas?

THR's awards expert weighs in after the holidays provided plenty of shake-ups in the race **BY SCOTT FEINBERG**

BEST PICTURE

↑ ***Avatar: The Way of Water***
James Cameron's sequel to his 2009 epic blockbuster rode an A CinemaScore to top the box office over the four-day Christmas weekend, raking in $95.5 million to bring its haul domestically to $293.2 million and internationally to $955.1 million.



↑ ***Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery***
On Dec. 23, one month after its chart-topping one-week theatrical release, **Rian Johnson**'s star-studded sequel debuted on Netflix and within three days was the streamer's most-watched film around the world, with 35 million household views.

↓ ***Babylon***
Paramount may soon be shifting even more of its attention to its summer blockbuster *Top Gun: Maverick*. Its $80 million fall hopeful from Oscar winner **Damien Chazelle** just tanked with the sixth-worst wide-opening weekend ever ($3.5 million) and a C+ CinemaScore.

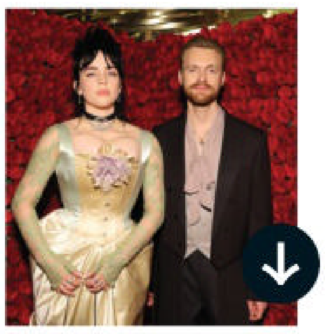
BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

↓ ***Good Night Oppy***
The Academy's doc branch, which didn't nominate hits like *Life Itself*, *Blackfish*, *Won't You Be My Neighbor* and *Apollo 11*, didn't even shortlist two of the year's buzziest titles, this one about a real WALL-E, and another, *Sr.*, about **Robert Downey Jr.**'s dad.

BEST INTERNATIONAL FEATURE

↑ ***All Quiet on the Western Front***
This German anti-war film is the only international feature submission to show up on that shortlist plus others. It landed on five (makeup/hairstyling, original score, sound and VFX), equaled only by *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*.

BEST ORIGINAL SONG



↓ **"Nobody Like U" (*Turning Red*)**
Just months after the siblings won this award for "No Time to Die," **Billie Eilish** and **Finneas**' Pixar tune was the most glaring omission from a shortlist that included **Rihanna**, **Lady Gaga**, **The Weeknd**, **Taylor Swift**, **Drake** and **Selena Gomez**.

AVATAR: COURTESY OF 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS. *ONION*: JOHN WILSON/NETFLIX. *BABYLON*: COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES. *OPPY*: COURTESY OF PRIME VIDEO. *WESTERN*: REINER BAJO/NETFLIX. EILISH: CINDY ORD/MG22/GETTY IMAGES FOR THE MET MUSEUM/VOGUE.

★★★★
"AN ACCOMPLISHED THRILLER"
— UK FILM REVIEW

"YOU WILL BE HOLDING YOUR BREATH"
— ORCASOUND

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST LIVE ACTION SHORT FILM

THE LONE WOLF

WRITER AND DIRECTOR
FILIPE MELO

h264
For more on this film, go to www.h264distribution.com
OFFICIAL SELECTION HOLLYSHORTS FILM FESTIVAL 2022
OFFICIAL SELECTION REGARD
CURTAS Vila do Conde 2021 PORTUGUESE AUDIENCE AWARD
SOPHIA MELHOR CURTA-METRAGEM DE FICÇÃO VENCEDOR 2022
VIFF Official Selection 2022

For Your Consideration

BEST INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILM – IRELAND

"LUMINOUS…

THERE MAY NOT BE A MOVIE MORE EXPRESSIVE OF THE SEASON'S BENEVOLENT ETHOS THAN THIS HUSHED WORK ABOUT KITH AND KINDNESS."

The New York Times

"THIS IS FILMMAKING AT ITS MOST ALCHEMICAL, TURNING EVERY INGREDIENT TO GOLD."

Deadline

"DELICATE AND HEARTBREAKING…

ONE OF THE YEAR'S BEST FILMS."

The Playlist

"LOVELY AND TRANSFIXING…

THE DIRECTOR AND HIS YOUNG STAR MAY WORK IN HUSHED TONES, BUT THEIR TALENTS SING OUT LOUDLY."

The Wall Street Journal

"THIS IS AN ABSOLUTE JEWEL."

The Hollywood Reporter

ONE OF THE BEST FILMS OF 2022

Rotten Tomatoes • The Hollywood Reporter • Deadline • Sight & Sound • Screen International
The Guardian • The New Statesman • The Irish Times • Observer • Hammer to Nail

The Quiet Girl

An Cailín Ciúin

DIRECTED BY COLM BAIRÉAD

Berlinale
Best Feature Film
Generation
72. Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin

Audience Favorite
FILM FEST 919
2022

7 IFTA
FILM & DRAMA
AWARDS
INCLUDING BEST FILM

WINNER
JURY AWARD
BEST PICTURE
NEWPORT BEACH FILM FESTIVAL

super
Fís Éireann
Screen Ireland
Cine4
TG4
Inscéal

7 Days of DEALS

Who's inking on the dotted line this week

RICKY STRAUSS HIRE SIGNALS BIG SWINGS AHEAD FOR APPLE TV+

Deal of the Week

Apple, the world's largest company, has always had a soft spot for that Disney magic. That's why **Steve Jobs** asked **Bob Iger** to serve on Apple's board (Iger resigned when Apple officially entered the content business) and why it was eager to work with former Disney/Pixar executive **John Lasseter** as part of its multiyear deal with Skydance Animation.

With Apple TV+, the tech giant is taking a page from HBO, ordering fewer TV shows and movies but aiming for a quality that's a cut above the rest. But the Apple brand has always been a bit more family-friendly than HBO, and the Disney envy is still apparent.

Enter **Ricky Strauss**. When Disney launched the marketing campaigns for such films as *Frozen*, *The Avengers*, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *Incredibles 2*, it turned to Strauss' team to deliver. A veteran producer, production executive and marketer, Strauss had founded Ricochet Media, and later worked as Participant president, before joining Disney in 2012 to head marketing for its film studio. He then spearheaded marketing and content for the launch of Disney+, an effort that saw the streaming service rocket to nearly 90 million subscribers in just its first year.

Now Apple wants a piece of that magic for itself. The tech giant tapped Strauss, who exited Disney a year ago, on Jan. 3 to lead marketing for Apple TV+, a bold hire that suggests it is serious about growing its streaming division, and potentially its theatrical efforts. In streaming, while Apple has promoted Apple TV+, it has not spent nearly as much time or marketing money as its competitors. With a fresh price hike and with big investments like its Major League Soccer deal on the horizon, Apple clearly believes streaming is a real business, and now Strauss will be the one to sell it to a public that may only know the service for the Emmy-winning *Ted Lasso* or perhaps best picture Oscar winner *CODA*. Strauss' experience marketing blockbusters could be just what the tech giant needs.

Ricky Strauss has led marketing campaigns for Disney's biggest feature tentpoles.

This year will see Apple release **Ridley Scott**'s *Napoleon*, **Martin Scorsese** and **Leonardo DiCaprio**'s *Killers of the Flower Moon* and Lasseter's animated *Spellbound*. The slate may not be as big as Disney's or Paramount's, but it's stacked with boldface names and titles with the potential to be hits, both in theaters and on streaming. And now the company has hired someone who knows how to sell hits.

Apple has already shown a willingness to embrace the big-screen experience and a commitment to make a bold awards-season push, but it has yet to release a film that would qualify as a bona fide blockbuster. This year's slate, with Strauss at the helm of those campaigns, could be what it needs to take that next step. — ALEX WEPRIN

Inside View

Top 10 of the Nielsen Streaming Charts

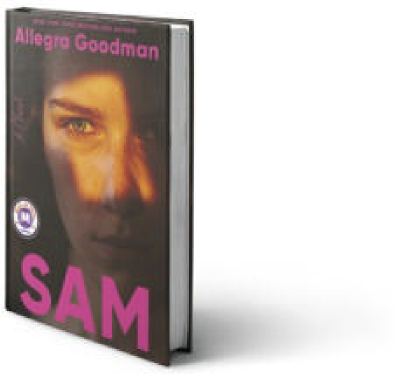
Stranger Things ruled the streaming landscape in 2022, but acquired shows made up more than half the top 10. Viewing times are based on weeks in the top 10 only.
— RICK PORTER

Title (Outlet)	Total Minutes Viewed	Weeks in Top 10
Stranger Things (Netflix)	46.51B	19
NCIS (Netflix)	32.48B	45
Cocomelon (Netflix)	31.69B	45
Ozark (Netflix)	27.36B	25
Grey's Anatomy (Netflix)	22.77B	45
Encanto (Disney+)	22.26B	37
*Criminal Minds** (Netflix)	16.05B	26
Dahmer — Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story (Netflix)	12.43B	6
Bluey (Disney+)	12.27B	28
Gilmore Girls (Netflix)	11.62B	26

*Moved to Paramount+ in July; no data available after that. Source: Nielsen streaming rankings, Jan. 3-Nov. 13, 2022

Rights Available!

Hot new books with Hollywood appeal BY SEIJA RANKIN

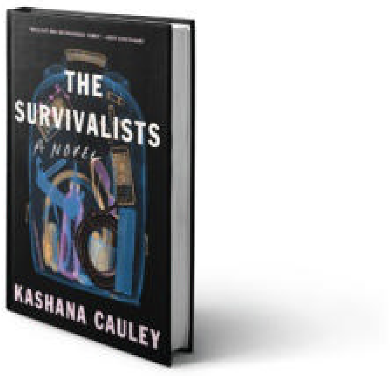


Sam

(DIAL PRESS, JAN. 3)

BY **Allegra Goodman**
AGENCY **CAA**

In the vein of *Boyhood*, Goodman's latest novel follows a young girl growing up. But like that sneakily weepy movie, the story of Sam's not-so-ordinary life in Massachusetts — with heartbreak, insecurities, parental complications — hits like a gut punch.



The Survivalists

(SOFT SKULL, JAN. 10)

BY **Kashana Cauley**
AGENCY **WME**

What begins as a novel of carefree single life — protagonist Aretha is a lawyer who moves through the brunch hotspots and nightclubs of Brooklyn with joy — turns sinister after she starts dating a man whose quirky interest in disaster survival reveals itself to be dangerous.

STRAUSS: MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY IMAGES FOR DISNEY+. BOOKS: COURTESY OF PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE (2).

The Hollywood Reporter

HEAT VISION

FROM SUPERHEROES TO SCI-FI, HEAT VISION IS YOUR COMIC & GENRE DESTINATION

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People, Places, Preoccupations

PERSON OF INTEREST

Lucy Boynton

The *Bohemian Rhapsody* breakout star goes darker in *The Pale Blue Eye*

By Seija Rankin

In a booth at the Four Seasons in Beverly Hills, COVID is on the table. It's a subject that can't be avoided, especially since actors are still promoting projects created under dire public-health conditions. "I don't think we'll ever be done with this topic," says **Lucy Boynton**, gripping a mug of tea and sporting freshly dyed red hair. "I still feel the need to ask everyone I meet, like, 'Are you OK?' "

Boynton is in L.A. for the premiere of her new movie, Netflix's *The Pale Blue Eye*, which was shot during 2021's initial omicron surge. It's a grisly origin story of sorts for **Edgar Allan Poe**; the budding young poet is a cadet at West Point military academy, where he falls in love with a seemingly fragile young woman (Boynton) during the hunt for a campus serial killer. The film, which debuts on the streamer Jan. 6, is the latest in a string of period pieces for the actress, but a harrowing, witchcraft-y third act offers a major departure — especially for those who know her best from *Bohemian Rhapsody* or *The Politician*.

"I've been gravitating toward darker roles," she explains. "Those characters are usually people who are underestimated, with plot twists that reveal them to be more complex than anyone could have imagined, and I just love sinking my teeth into that kind of thing."

The cast — **Harry Melling** plays Poe, **Christian Bale** stars

Photographed by **Austin Hargrave**

After every project, "My fears are less about will I work again and more about will anything ever live up to this experience again?" says Lucy Boynton, who was photographed at the Toronto Film Festival in September 2022. "Will I get to do something I care this passionately about again?"

as a troubled detective assigned to the murder case, and **Gillian Anderson** is Boynton's mother — was in isolation for the entire shoot, filming outdoors during a New England winter. Deep cold created a sense of camaraderie, and the lack of outside distractions felt conducive to creativity: "There's something that feels almost selfish about getting to completely indulge in the work, to benefit from getting lost in the material," says the actress, who was born in New York City and raised in London by two journalist parents.

This spring, another of the actress' pandemic-era projects will finally come to light: She co-stars as **Marie Antoinette** (yes, more corsets for Boynton) in *Chevalier*, Searchlight's biopic of **Joseph Bologne**, a prodigious Black violinist and composer in 1700s France who is all but unknown in the present day. The film asks big questions about the bias of history's authors, challenging viewers to ask themselves why certain stories are told (Marie Antoinette, Boynton points out, "has been villainized in a way that is specifically reserved for women"). The role came about as the pandemic was pushing workers to reassess their priorities, and Boynton herself was finding her voice professionally. "I wasn't in the rhythm of being in a professional environment anymore, so my awareness of a hierarchy had diluted, and I found myself talking very confidently and boldly to my directors, and I never would have done that a year prior," says Boynton, who also stars in two upcoming U.K. miniseries *The Ipcress File* and *Why Didn't They Ask Evans?* "It shocked me at first, but what was I holding back on before? It's been exciting to see myself having a stronger opinion."

Boynton with Harry Melling in *The Pale Blue Eye*.

PALE: SCOTT GARFIELD/NETFLIX. POLO: COURTESY OF ST. REGIS (3). BIALIK: COURTESY OF SUBJECT.

In Aspen, producer and Favorite Daughter founder Sara Foster (left) and Kate Hudson at the snow polo championship at the St. Regis on Dec. 20, which featured player Nacho Figueras.

Where Hollywood Vacationed Over the Holidays

Stars thronged popular getaways like St. Barts, Cabo and Aspen and also journeyed to such far-flung spots as the Andes and Easter Island: 'This might be the best place on earth!' posted Molly Sims of Costa Rica

By Ingrid Schmidt

From perennial hotspots to unexpected locales, here are the highlights of Hollywood's seasonal travels.

ARGENTINA *Bros'* **Luke Macfarlane** went mountain-climbing in the Andes on Mount Aconcagua. "A trip this high requires patience with weather and the effects of thin air," he posted.

ASPEN **Jeff Bezos** and **Lauren Sánchez** and **Rebel Wilson** with girlfriend **Ramona Agruma** hit the ski slopes, while **Kate Hudson** and fiancé **Danny Fujikawa** were among guests at the Aspen World Snow Polo Championships at the St. Regis.

BALI **Taraji P. Henson** relaxed on the Indonesian island, while **Nicole Ari Parker**, **Boris Kodjoe** and their kids visited a monkey sanctuary.

CABO In the mix were UTA's **Jay Sures** and **Dan Erlij**; FX's **Nick Grad**, **Pablo Schreiber**, **Nina Dobrev** and **Shaun White**; and Disney's **Sharon Klein**.

CHILE **Colman Domingo** went to Easter Island, booking his trip just two weeks ahead of time "when some plans changed," he posted.

COSTA RICA Netflix film head **Scott Stuber** visited with wife **Molly Sims** and their kids. "This might be the best place on earth! We went in caves, snorkeled, swam, beached and ATV'd," she posted. A group that included **Ronan Farrow**, **Natasha Lyonne** and Freeform president **Tara Duncan** also posted vacation pics from there.

Mayim Bialik at a historic site in Tzfat, Israel. "Many of Judaism's most beloved and well-known prayers and songs were composed in the hills and valleys of Tzfat," she says, "such as the one we sing every Friday night, 'L'cha Dodi.' "

King Richard's Demi Singleton enjoyed sights in Egypt on camelback.

DEER VALLEY Opting for an escape in Utah were UTA's **Matt Rice** and **Marissa Devins**, **Max Mutchnick**, **Terry Crews** and **Elizabeth Banks**.

MAUI Stylist **Jason Bolden** and his interior designer husband, **Adair Curtis**, hung with **Gabrielle Union** and **Dwyane Wade**, who made a late-night Chick-fil-A run.

ST. BARTS Vacationers included **Amy Schumer**, **Diddy**, and **Ethan Hawke** with wife **Ryan Shawhughes** and his children, *Stranger Things* star **Maya Hawke** and **Levon Thurman-Hawke**. On Dec. 29, **Taika Waititi**, **Rita Ora**, **Mary J. Blige**, **Luke Evans** and *CODA* producer **Philippe Rousselet** attended LuisaViaRoma's UNICEF Winter Gala.

ISRAEL **Mayim Bialik** toured the historic city of Tzfat (aka Safed). "Tzfat is a powerful city with rich history and tremendous spiritual significance," she tells *THR*, "and, while it's known for Tzfat cheese, this vegan prefers its incredible falafel!"

MOROCCO Director and DP **Rachel Morrison** traveled to Morocco, as did **Demi Singleton**, who also visited Luxor, Egypt.

WALES **Taron Egerton** cooked braised red cabbage for family in his hometown of Aberystwyth.

Yes, I Did Say That!

A look at who's saying what in entertainment

Compiled by Sydney Odman

"I'm loving it."

ANGELA BASSETT
The *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* actress, to *Vanity Fair,* on the awards buzz surrounding her performance in the film — her first awards run in nearly 30 years, since her Oscar nomination for best actress in 1993's *What's Love Got to Do With It.*

"I lost my shit on them, and by 7pm I was fired from Fight Club."

COURTNEY LOVE
The singer, on Instagram, defending her claims that she was fired from David Fincher's *Fight Club* after she refused Brad Pitt's request for the rights to play her late husband, Kurt Cobain. (Neither Fincher nor Pitt has commented on the matter.)

"All these late night hosts are great, but they're not representing us. Women represent women."

CHELSEA HANDLER
The former *Chelsea Lately* host, to the *Last Laugh* podcast, on her interest in taking on a late night gig — specifically, the now-vacant job at the *The Daily Show.*

"You don't put your hands on a woman, ever."

DANA WHITE
The UFC president, to *TMZ,* apologizing for slapping his wife of 26 years, Anne, at a New Year's party in Mexico, in an altercation captured on video.

"If not for her, I don't know where most of us would be."

WHOOPI GOLDBERG
The comedian and host, on *The View,* paying tribute to her late former co-host, Barbara Walters, whose legendary journalistic career helped pave the way for women in news and television.

"I'm pissed off that we have *A Knives Out Mystery* in the title."

RIAN JOHNSON
The *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* director, to *The Atlantic,* on wanting the title of the second Benoit Blanc mystery to be shorter.

"They've shown absolutely no willingness to reconcile."

PRINCE HARRY
The British royal, to ITV, on his desire to reconnect with his father, King Charles III, and brother, Prince William.

"One day my kids will thank me for sitting here and not bashing their dad when I could."

KIM KARDASHIAN
The reality TV star, to the *Angie Martinez IRL* podcast, on protecting her kids from the public drama of her divorce from Kanye "Ye" West, as well as the controversies surrounding West's recent antisemitic comments.

FLASHBACK! Did I Really Say That?

DECEMBER 31, 2021

"There's a bunch of smoke coming from Ryan Seacrest's group of losers that are performing behind us."

ANDY COHEN
The Bravo host, on CNN's *New Year's Eve Live,* slamming the rival ABC broadcast *Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve,* after drinking on the air. Cohen later expressed regret for his comments. This year, Cohen and co-host Anderson Cooper stayed sober during the live CNN telecast.

BASSETT: RICH POLK/PENSKE MEDIA VIA GETTY IMAGES. WHITE, JOHNSON: MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY IMAGES. CHOEN: UDO SALTERS/PATRICK MCMULLAN VIA GETTY IMAGES. KARDASHIAN: PHILLIP FARAONE/GETTY IMAGES FOR BABY2BABY.

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Jean-Marc Vallée, who died in 2021, was honored at a December service in Santa Monica.

Rambling Reporter

By Chris Gardner

A Long-Delayed Memorial for Jean-Marc Vallée

Auteur **Jean-Marc Vallée** died on Christmas Day 2021, and, given the sudden nature of his death — from coronary artery disease — and a COVID-19 surge, his Hollywood family wasn't able to gather to honor his life until a recent December day. In what was described as a "small, intimate and private" gathering, actors, writers, producers, crew and execs from Vallée's projects like *Dallas Buyers Club*, *Big Little Lies*, *Sharp Objects* and *Wild* headed to Shutters on the Beach in Santa Monica for an afternoon service that was supported by HBO and Searchlight and organized by his two sons, **Émile** and **Alex**. After eulogies, guests took a stroll to the Pacific Ocean during magic hour to toss roses into the sea, and everyone went home with a mixtape made by one of his sons, per a tradition started by Vallée, who used to hand them out to cast and crew on his productions. "Though it's been a year, clearly those who were there were still grieving from this seismic loss," producing partner **Nathan Ross** tells *THR*. "He and his work will be missed."

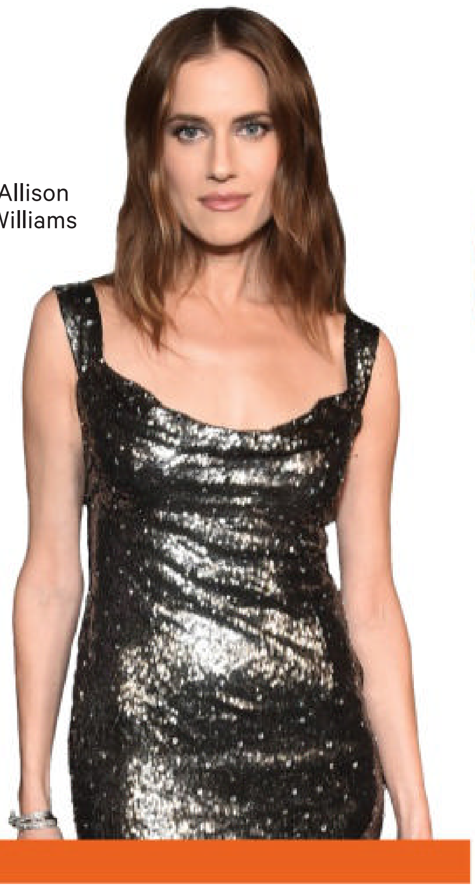
If Christian Bale Gets a Producer Credit, He Wants to Earn It

Christian Bale is charting a new career path: producer. After receiving his first such credit, on **David O. Russell**'s *Amsterdam* in the fall, he snagged another one on his new film, *The Pale Blue Eye*. But Bale is not one to sneak the credit into his contracts as some vanity gift. "Like everybody, I'm stunned sometimes at the amount of producers you see in the credits," Bale explained to *THR* at the recent premiere of the Netflix film that he produced for filmmaker and frequent collaborator **Scott Cooper**. "I did it on *Amsterdam* and with this because I was there right from the inception. I helped to put the films together, and mostly as a creative producer, a right-hand man, sort of a consigliere," Bale said. "I wouldn't want to do it if it's not appropriate and I'm not putting in the work." — KIRSTEN CHUBA

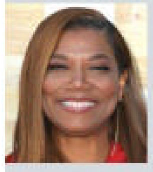
Scott Cooper (right) directing Christian Bale on the set of *The Pale Blue Eye*.

Why a Murderous Robotic Doll Was Allison Williams' Most 'Complicated' Co-Star

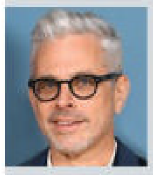
The title character of Blumhouse and Universal's latest horror pic, *M3gan* — an evil, eerily lifelike animatronic doll — was "my most complicated co-star," says **Allison Williams**, who plays M3gan's inventor. To create the killer android, filmmakers used a combination of a real robot, special effects and young actress **Amie Donald**. "Sometimes it was also just a piece of tape in an 'X' shape," adds Williams. "It was just a very singular experience. I doubt I'll ever have another one like it." *THR*



Allison Williams



Latifah



Appel

Power Dining

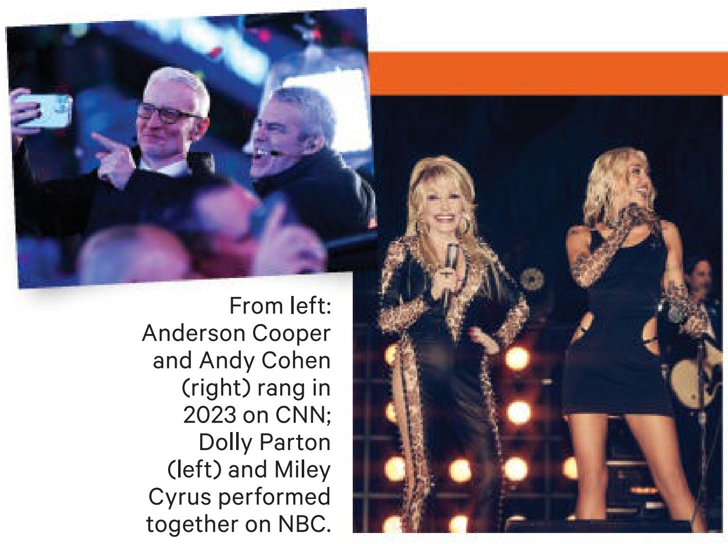
Leonardo DiCaprio, **James Marsden**, **Eiza González** and **Emile Hirsch** attended a holiday party at Catch LA. ... **Queen Latifah** had a night out with friends at Giorgio Baldi, where **Zooey Deschanel** and **Jonathan Scott** also stepped out for a dinner date. ... **Adele** celebrated boyfriend **Rich Paul**'s birthday at Olivetta. ... **Colin Farrell** got his morning started at Maru Coffee. ... **Mindy Kaling** stopped by L.A. fusion favorite Pijja Palace. ... *Family Guy* exec producer **Richard Appel** was spotted at Chateau Marmont. ... Paradigm agent **Nick LoPiccolo** dined at Catch Steak L.A. ... **Eric Dane** lunched at Mauro Cafe.

HOT NEW RESTAURANT

Workshop Kitchen and Bar

The Quick Pitch

Michael Beckman, who introduced his Workshop concept in Palm Springs a decade ago, has brought his vision — monochromatic minimalism in the dining room, Euro-inflected modernism on the plate — to Mid-City. The menu ranges from Southern-fried oyster mushrooms with herbed buttermilk sauce to rock cod with pickled orange and rosemary-poblano ferment. Try the Russian honey sponge cake for dessert, with gooseberries and corn smut ice cream. ***127 S. La Brea Ave.*** — GARY BAUM



From left: Anderson Cooper and Andy Cohen (right) rang in 2023 on CNN; Dolly Parton (left) and Miley Cyrus performed together on NBC.

NYE '23 on TV

While much of Hollywood was on holiday, some stars went back to work early, hopping on TV to help ring in 2023. **Miley Cyrus** returned to NBC for her second New Year's Eve special, this time co-hosting with godmother **Dolly Parton** with appearances by **Sia**, **Paris Hilton**, **David Byrne** and *SNL* castmembers. **Andy Cohen** and **Anderson Cooper** led CNN's NYE broadcast for the sixth time — and, for the first time, were required to remain sober — with celebrity guests **Kevin Hart**, **Brian Cox** and **Jean Smart**. **Ryan Seacrest** also hosted his 18th NYC celebration on *Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve*, with an appearance by **Quinta Brunson**, as **Ciara** tag-teamed from Disneyland and introduced performers like **Ben Platt** and **Halle Bailey**. — K.C.

Got tips? Email **rambling@thr.com**

PALE: SCOTT GARFIELD/NETFLIX. WILLIAMS: ALBERTO RODRIGUEZ/GA/THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER VIA GETTY IMAGES. COOPER: ROY ROCHLIN/GETTY IMAGES. PARTON: VIJAT MOHINDRA/NBC. LATIFAH, APPEL: STEVE GRANITZ/FILMMAGIC. RESTAURANT: AUDREY MA. VALLEE: CHRISTOPHER POLK/GETTY IMAGES. HOTEL: FG/BAUER-GRIFFIN/GC IMAGES.

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1 Kimberly Ann Devine Dora and her parents **2** Alexandra Bijan and Dana Brunetti **3** Barbara Walters

Hitched, Hatched, Hired

Inside the industry's celebrations and news

Births

Actress **GG Townson** and **Vontarrius Dora**, who played in the NFL, welcomed daughter **Kimberly Ann Devine Dora** on Aug. 12 in L.A.

Weddings

Producer **Dana Brunetti** married lawyer **Alexandra Bijan** at their Northern California home on Dec. 22. They honeymooned in Dubai.

Congrats

Former Sundance chief **Keri Putnam** and tech executive **Dee Clark** joined AMC Entertainment's board of directors Dec. 29.

Pamela Corante was hired as vp global communications, with an emphasis on anti-piracy initiatives, for the Motion Picture Association, effective Jan. 3.

Raina Falcon was promoted to senior vp communications at HBO and HBO Max Content on Dec. 14.

Netflix's **Amir Moini** joined Fangoria Studios as its first chief marketing officer Dec. 19.

Former Disney exec **Cristina Fiumara** was named global head of animation content development for film and TV at Riot Games on Dec. 15.

Philpott

Jaclyn Philpott was tapped as the first executive director of the Association of Film Commissioners International, effective Jan. 3.

Online film marketplace Slated promoted **Ann Nguyen** to CEO and **Greg Gertmenian** to head of business development Dec. 12.

Ireton

Production exec **Bill Ireton** departed Sony Pictures to launch a Japan-based indie banner Jan. 1.

Maggy Chan was hired to lead NBCUniversal's global advertising and partnerships in the U.S., EMEA and Asia Pacific regions Dec. 19.

Nancy Ward was named Visual Effects Society executive director on Dec. 16.

Ricky Strauss was named head of AppleTV+ marketing on Jan. 3.

Full Coverage Communications hired **Melissa O'Toole** as director and **Avery Robinson** as senior publicist Dec. 16.

Deaths

Barbara Walters, whose TV interviews with celebrities and world figures blended show business and journalism and induced many a tear, died Dec. 30 in New York. She was 93.

Don Williams, who teamed with Andy Williams and their brothers in a quartet that performed on the radio and in the movies, died Dec. 30 in Branson, Missouri. He was 100.

Bill Pence, co-founder of the Telluride Film Festival, died Dec. 6 after a long illness. He was 82.

Vivienne Westwood, the irreverent fashion designer who came to prominence with the Sex Pistols, died Dec. 29 in London. She was 81.

Diane McBain, who played spoiled rich girls on *Surfside 6* and opposite Elvis Presley in *Spinout*, died Dec. 21 in Woodland Hills. She was 81.

Dax Tejera, executive producer of the ABC public affairs show *This Week*, died Dec. 23 of a heart attack. He was 37.

Edie Landau, a producer on the Oscar-nominated *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, died Dec. 24 in Century City. She was 95.

Peter Sealey, a former marketing executive at Columbia Pictures, died Dec. 15 in Palm Springs. He was 82.

Anita Pointer, co-founder of The Pointer Sisters, died Dec. 31 of cancer in Beverly Hills. She was 74.

1939-2022

Robert J. Dowling

He took underdog *THR* to great heights during his 17-year run as publisher and editor-in-chef

Dowling

Dowling, who said he was "always launching something or improving something," served atop *THR* from 1988 to 2005, and after his Dec. 30 death at his home in Santa Monica following a short battle with cancer, he is remembered for his enormous integrity, endless curiosity and ability to reduce the complicated to the simple. When studio execs would look to squash an unfavorable story by threatening to pull advertising, Dowling would ask them, "Is it true?" When it was, he would back his writers, and the story would run. "We are indebted to his wonderful contributions," *THR* editorial director Nekesa Mumbi Moody says. — MIKE BARNES

To submit, send email to **hhh@thr.com**

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2023 HONOREES

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BRENDAN FRASER
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Photo by Dalvin Adams

DANIELLE DEADWYLER
BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE AWARD, ACTRESS
TILL • UNITED ARTISTS RELEASING

Photo by Aliona Adrrianova

BILL NIGHY
INTERNATIONAL STAR AWARD, ACTOR
LIVING • SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

Photo by AB+DM

VIOLA DAVIS
CHAIRMAN'S AWARD
THE WOMAN KING • TRISTAR PICTURES

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AUSTIN BUTLER
BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE AWARD, ACTOR
ELVIS • WARNER BROS.

Photo by Thomas Laisne

MICHELLE YEOH
INTERNATIONAL STAR AWARD, ACTRESS
EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE • A24

Photo by Tom Munro

CATE BLANCHETT
DESERT PALM ACHIEVEMENT AWARD, ACTRESS
TÁR • FOCUS FEATURES

Photo by Derek Shapton

SARAH POLLEY
DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD
WOMEN TALKING • UNITED ARTISTS RELEASING

THE FABELMANS
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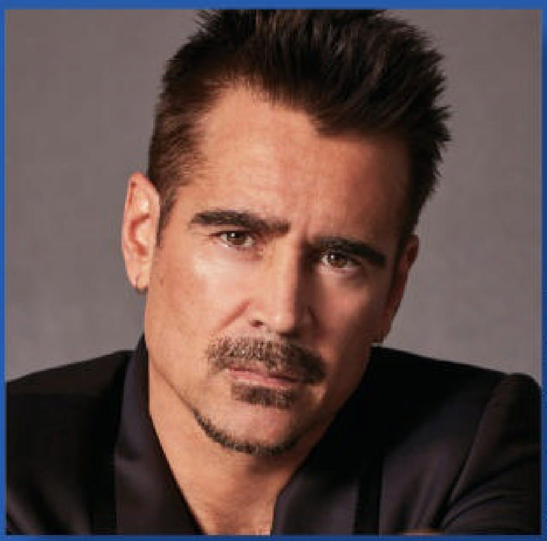
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COLIN FARRELL
DESERT PALM ACHIEVEMENT AWARD, ACTOR
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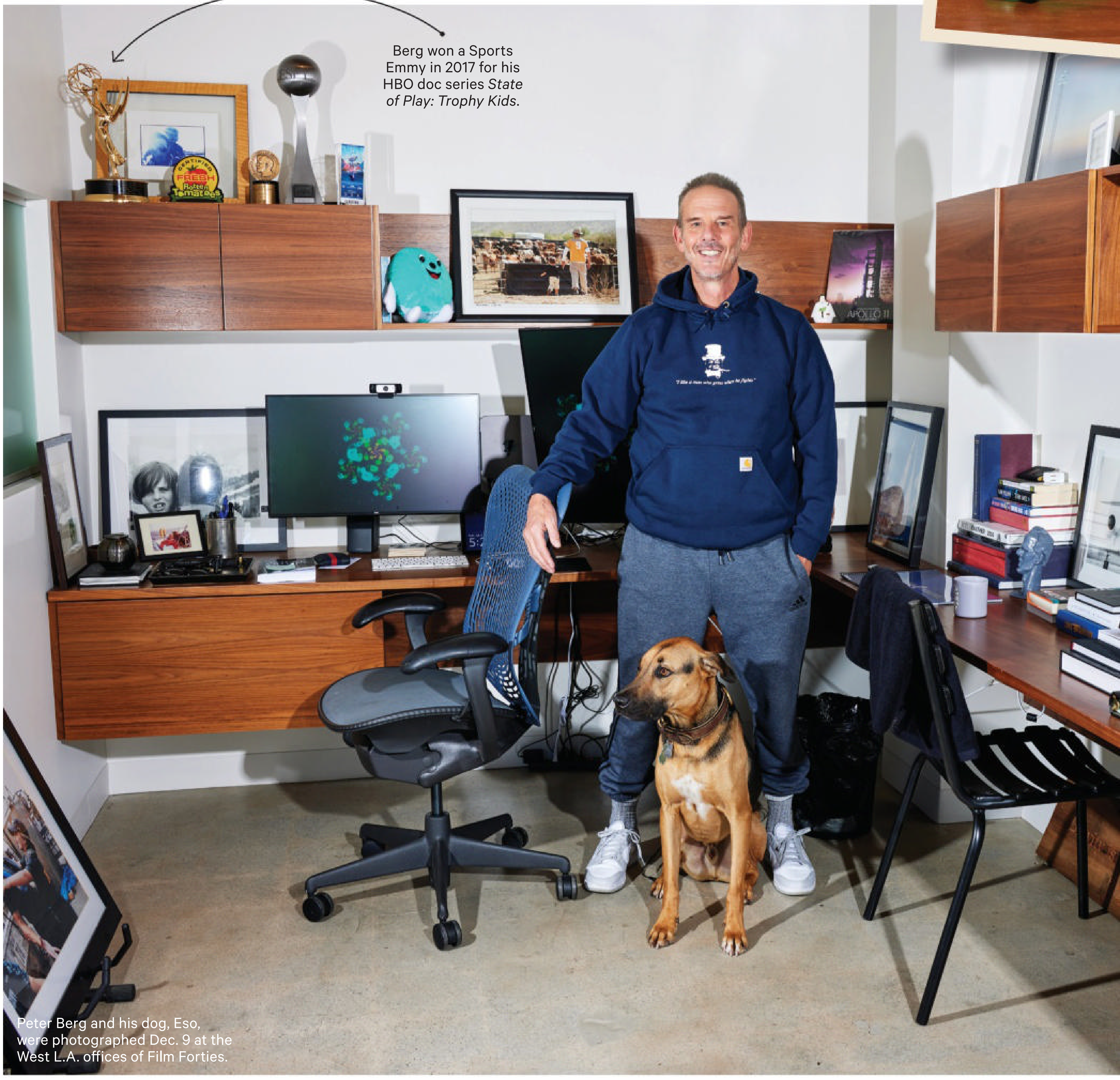
Creative Space

Peter Berg

The filmmaker talks about a different kind of football doc, following Rihanna with a camera for six years and lessons from past roommates who forged their own wildly successful Hollywood paths

By Mikey O'Connell



Berg won a Sports Emmy in 2017 for his HBO doc series *State of Play: Trophy Kids.*

Peter Berg and his dog, Eso, were photographed Dec. 9 at the West L.A. offices of Film Forties.

Peter Berg didn't know how to respond to the 2020 murder of George Floyd. It was not the Minneapolis that the filmmaker, a graduate of Saint Paul's Macalester College, thought he knew. Eventually, he turned to football, as he had before in his career — following the predominantly Black players at the city's North Community High School along with their coaches (also members of the Minneapolis PD) for a football season that proved fraught on and off the field.

Boys in Blue, the resulting four-part Showtime series (out Jan. 6), may signal a softening for the 57-year-old director. Best known for such machismo-fueled features as *Friday Night Lights*, *Hancock* and *Battleship*, Berg is also readying a Netflix limited series about the opioid crisis (*Painkiller*) and a long-gestating Rihanna doc for Amazon — if she approves the cut. Speaking from the West L.A. offices of his Film Forties production company, Berg spoke candidly about his shifting career and the unforeseeable challenges of *Boys in Blue*.

There's one white coach/cop in this show, and everyone gets into the understandable skepticism he initially encountered at this school. What did you have to do to assuage any similar skepticism?

It's always a challenge when you're asking people to allow you in — particularly with all of the baggage going into this. We weren't filming any old high school football program. It's a program that was still very much in the middle of a firestorm. And I spent a lot of time, particularly with Officer Charles Adams, who knew my work. He understood that we weren't going in there to make a gross political statement about what happened to Mr. Floyd. It became *very* challenging.

Just looking at the logline, not the series itself, there's going to be accusations of copaganda. Are you prepared for that?

I'm a centrist. To anyone that has really strong, unshakable anti-law enforcement viewpoints, I would suggest they watch the show and see if it does anything to surprise them. I know a lot of police officers who I believe have been good cops and I've met some who I don't think are. The coaches-slash-cops in *Boys in Blue* are, in my opinion, an example of the very best of law enforcement. Derek Chauvin is an example of the very worst. But copaganda? I know I'm going to hear it.

Deshaun Hill Jr., the quarterback you spent so much time with, was killed just after the season. How did you process that tragedy and having to address it on the show?

That was the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my career. This beautiful 15-year-old quarterback, three days after the state championship, was leaving school, bumped into some kid. The kid pulled out a gun, shot him in the head and killed him. Obviously, everyone was traumatized. We were still shooting. There was no easy way to process it.

Photographed by **Maggie Shannon**

From left: Berg, who also produced the series *Friday Night Lights*, has personalized action figures based on the 2004 film of the same name; a native New Yorker, he has multiple souvenirs from the Giants' 2012 Super Bowl win, including a signed helmet and his tickets to the game; and among his many clapboards are tokens from music videos he directed for Maroon 5, commercials for AT&T and Ford as well as one for the feature *Patriots Day*.

You have two series on deck with Taylor Kitsch, who starred in the TV series *Friday Night Lights* and *Battleship*. You've worked with Mark Wahlberg a lot, too. Why do you find yourself going back to the same actors?
When I get comfortable with someone, or form a real friendship, I can work better. I can be more honest. They can be more honest. I can call [Taylor] out real fast on his bullshit, and he can do the same for me. When people ask me why I work with Wahlberg so many times, it's because I trust that if I say the wrong thing, it's not going to be a catastrophic shutdown. I like knowing what I'm getting into, especially with lead roles in complex shoots.

You've said your directorial debut, *Very Bad Things*, got the worst review in the history of film criticism.
There's no question. It was Kenneth Turan at the *Los Angeles Times*. It was so bad that I was at a bar in L.A., and he was there, and I started to go after him, and my friend had to hold me back. He tried to run me out of the business, for sure. It took him, like, four movies to finally give me a good review [for the *Friday Night Lights* film]. But then I got arguably the best review, certainly in TV, in *The New York Times* for the TV show *Friday Night Lights*. So, I've gotten the worst *and* the best.

So how does that impact your relationship with criticism?
I don't care anymore. Truly. I literally threw up after I read Kenneth's review, but then I get a phone call and it's, "Hold for Steven Spielberg." Spielberg called me with David Geffen. They said, "We're watching it right now and we love it." If you can't process the highs and lows and find a way of living in the middle, it's going to be a rough road.

Richard Plepler used to talk about how huge *Battleship* was for HBO. What was your take on why it wasn't as huge at the box office?
The big problem we had was coming out a week after *The Avengers*. Everyone thought *The Avengers* was going to open to $48 million and then drop down to $18 million. That was the pattern of Marvel films at the time. David Kosse, who was head of international distribution at Universal at the time, said, "No, it's going to be a monster. We'll go international first." International comes out, a big success, and then we come out [domestically] after *The Avengers* opens to [$207] million and holds and holds. We just get decimated.

You've worked with Taylor Sheridan over the years. Do you have any interest in the kind of massive franchise-building that he's doing over at Paramount?
I love Taylor. He's the most prolific writer that I've ever encountered, other than maybe David E. Kelley. I can't say that I don't have interest in that. Paramount needed a guy like that, and he loves that world. But Taylor is talented enough that if he decides he wants to shed this particular universe and do something totally different, he will. But what he's doing now is a bit unprecedented.

Where are you with the Rihanna documentary?
Waiting for her to approve it. It's done and sold, and Amazon's ready. She's a perfectionist, so we keep adding. It's been six and a half years of filming, so, yeah, it's ready to come out. We're just waiting on her to say, "Yeah, let's do it." I don't know. Maybe it'll be a 10-year project.

Among the gifts Berg has received from collaborators are several combat knives.

Any concerns that she might not approve it?
Not really. When Rihanna asked me to make a doc, I thought she was joking. My work tends to be a bit more masculine, at least on the surface. But this has allowed me to dip in and out of her life while I'm doing other things. I've loved it — watching her in the studio, seeing her turn Fenty into this billion-dollar entity and, now, being a mom. It's such an enriching experience, I don't really care how long it takes.

You own a boxing gym in Santa Monica. Was it hard to keep it afloat during early COVID?
By law, we had to close it, but I kept it open for all our pro fighters because they have enough challenges. The business is corrupt. The job is difficult. Loneliness and isolation were hard on everyone, but it felt particularly hard for these athletes. I probably lost 80 percent of my members, but I've since gotten almost all of them back. Churchill Boxing is open for business.

You lived with Ari Emanuel, your agent, in college and then briefly lived with Marc Maron in your 20s. So, who's the better roommate?
Well, Maron was a horrible roommate because he lived on the couch. (*Laughs.*) He was just drinking back then and playing the guitar. Ari was up at 4 a.m., an incredible work ethic, making me get up to exercise, working his ass off and going to bed at 6 p.m. So, Maron might have been more fun, but I got a great sense of discipline from Ari.

Interview edited for length and clarity.

THE RACE

Can *Babylon* Bounce Back From a Box Office Bomb?

Critics and audiences are mixed on Damien Chazelle's three-hour ode to Old Hollywood excess, but its awards chances aren't dead yet

By Gregg Kilday

When MGM's *Singin' in the Rain*, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen's musical valentine to Hollywood's silent film era as it transitioned into the world of talkies, opened in the spring of 1952, it instantly won over moviegoers. Writing in *The New York Times*, critic Bosley Crowther enthused, "Compounded generously of music, dance, color spectacle and a riotous abundance of Gene Kelly, Jean Hagen and Donald O'Connor on the screen, all elements in this rainbow program are carefully contrived and guaranteed to lift the dolors of winter and put you in a buttercup mood." The movie went on to become a box office hit, ranking as the 10th highest-grossing film of the year in North America. The Writers Guild awarded Betty Comden and Adolph Green its prize for best-written American musical. The Directors Guild nominated Kelly and Donen for outstanding direction. And the Golden Globe Awards nominated it as best comedy or musical.

But the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences wasn't as impressed, giving the movie a relative cold shoulder. It granted the film just two noms — a supporting actress nomination for Hagen, who plays the petulant and petty silent film star with a voice that grates, and a nom for best scoring of a motion picture — neither of which it won. (For the record, that year's best picture winner was Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth*, now universally considered one of the worst best picture winners ever, although it does figure in Steven Spielberg's *The Fabelmans* as the movie that first inspired the nascent filmmaker.)

The Academy has certainly changed in 70 years, but, still, *Singin' in the Rain*'s failure to impress the old Academy doesn't bode well for Damien Chazelle's *Babylon*'s chances with the new Academy, given that the new film revisits the same time period, Hollywood's fraught and frenzied transition to talkies and, along the way, references *Singin'* — both directly and indirectly.

From its very first screenings, the three-hour-plus *Babylon* earned the descriptor "divisive," which is just a polite way of saying that for everyone who enjoyed the film, there were lots more who enjoyed dumping on it. Critics were definitely mixed, with *Babylon* scoring a middling 55 percent on Rotten Tomatoes and a barely better 60 on Metacritic. *The New York Times*' Manohla Dargis dismissed the film as "a bloated folly," while the *Los Angeles Times*' Justin Chang was more appreciative of what he described as "a wild and pungent cinematic bacchanal." Audiences were underwhelmed; it received a C+ CinemaScore rating.

From left: Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds and Donald O'Connor in *Singin' in the Rain*, which Kelly co-directed with Stanley Donen.

If any further punctuation was needed, *Babylon* opened to a resounding belly flop at the box office. The $80 million Paramount release pulled in just $4.9 million over the four-day Christmas weekend from 3,343 theaters.

That would seem to seal *Babylon*'s fate, sinking its awards hopes. For while the Academy doesn't penalize small-scale films for failing to sell tickets, it tends to look askance at big-budget movies that play to empty theaters. But fortunately for *Babylon*, before its box office epitaph was written, several critics and awards groups weighed in, lending support for the film.

When the Golden Globe nominations were unveiled Dec. 12, *Babylon* picked up a solid five nods. It did game the system a bit by competing in the comedy or musical category — while the film has some bitter laughs and almost nonstop music, its closing moments are much closer to elegiac drama. But working the comedy side of the ledger, it picked up noms for best picture, actress Margot Robbie and actor Diego Calva, along with a nom for Brad Pitt as supporting actor and another for score.

Two days later, when the Critics Choice Awards nominees — which can be quite predictive of Oscar noms — were revealed, *Babylon*, tying with *The Banshees of Inisherin*, collected nine noms. (Only *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, with 14, and *The Fabelmans*, with 11, did better.) In addition to best picture, directing and actress, it collected six crafts nominations. Its strength in the crafts categories — which could help boost it into the best picture Oscar circle — was further underlined when the Oscar shortlists were released Dec. 21, and *Babylon* earned spots for makeup and hairstyling, score and sound.

So, even though *Babylon* might be headed to box office oblivion, attention will be paid. In fact, it's shaping up as one of the season's most hotly debated awards hopefuls. "*Babylon* is truly terrible. The most obnoxious film in years," Kim Jorgensen, the founder of Landmark Theatres, damned the movie in a Facebook post. But in another Facebook entry, film historian Joseph McBride wrote, "I saw *Babylon* last night and love it. Such a sad movie about the tragic decline and fall of a great film industry and the art form it helped create."

That kind of heated argument may mean an Oscar is out of reach for *Babylon*, but it doesn't preclude a bunch of nominations — probably more than the two *Singin' in the Rain* achieved, which would lend itself to a certain irony.

BABYLON: COURTESY PARAMOUNT PICTURES. *RAIN*: COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION.

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"LOVE SONG TO THE MOVIES ...BRIMMING WITH LIFE"
THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

"VISUALLY INTOXICATING"
AUSTIN CHRONICLE

"MAGICAL & WONDROUS BEYOND WORDS"
UNSEEN FILMS

"AN ETHEREAL TAKE ON THE MAGIC OF MOVIES"
INDIEWIRE

"STUNNING... AND HEART WRENCHING"
SOY DE CINE

"ENTERTAINS AS IT ENLIGHTENS"
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BBC TALKING MOVIES

"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL HOMAGE TO FILM SINCE CINEMA PARADISO"
HANNS GEORGE RODEK - DIE WELT

WINNER
BEST PICTURE
66TH SEMINICI
VALLADOLID INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
GOLDEN SPIRE AWARD
2022

WINNER
AUDIENCE FAVORITE
MILL VALLEY
FILM FESTIVAL
WORLD CINEMA

WINNER
BEST FILM
ASIAN WORLD
FILM FESTIVAL 2022
SNOW LEAPORD AWARD

WINNER
AUDIENCE AWARD
TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL
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Q&A AND RECEPTION WITH FILMMAKERS

JANUARY 7TH SATURDAY AT 2:30 PM
WALLINGFORD HOUSE
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Q&A AND RECEPTION WITH FILMMAKERS

JANUARY 8TH SUNDAY AT 12:00 PM
WALLINGFORD HOUSE
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Q&A AND RECEPTION WITH FILMMAKERS

JANUARY 9TH MONDAY AT 12:00 PM
WALLINGFORD HOUSE
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Q&A AND RECEPTION WITH FILMMAKERS

THE ACADEMY'S SHORTLIST SCREENING

LOS ANGELES	JANUARY 10TH TUESDAY AT 9:48 PM LINWOOD DUNN THEATER
NEW YORK	JANUARY 11TH WEDNESDAY AT 8:25 P MUSUEM OF MODERN ART
LONDON	JANUARY 11TH WEDNESDAY AT 9:20 P MUSUEM OF MODERN ART

Clockwise from left: Netflix's stop-motion *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio*, Netflix's war epic *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Neon's David Bowie doc *Moonage Daydream*.

BEHIND THE SCREEN

The Sound Race (Really) Mixes It Up

Among the movies that made the Oscar shortlist for best sound are an animated pic, a documentary, an international feature, musical films and tentpoles **By Carolyn Giardina**

It's shaping up to be particularly interesting year in the race for the Oscar in sound. The sound branch reinstated its shortlist and bake-off a year ago (one year after combining sound editing and mixing into a single category), and this season it narrowed the field for its Oscar to a fascinatingly diverse shortlist of stellar work on 10 movies.

Notably, the shortlist includes both an international and documentary feature: Germany's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Edward Berger's adaptation of the classic novel for Netflix (which also made the shortlists for international feature and for score, makeup and hairstyling, as well as visual effects), and Brett Morgen's David Bowie documentary, *Moonage Daydream* (also shortlisted in the doc feature competition). Historically, Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*, Mexico's entry in what was then called the foreign-language film category, was nominated for sound editing and mixing in 2018; the seminal concert doc *Woodstock* earned a best sound effects nom in 1971.

Also of note on this year's shortlist is the inclusion of *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio*, a frontrunner in the animated feature race (the movie also was shortlisted for Alexandre Desplat's score and original song "Ciao Papa"). Animated features have a unique challenge: They don't have production sound, meaning everything must be created. Since the turn of the century, Pixar's *The Incredibles* won the sound editing Oscar in 2004, while six other animated features have received nominations, most recently 2020's *Soul*.

This season's shortlist for sound is rounded out by the tentpoles *Avatar: The Way of Water*, *The Batman*, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* and *Top Gun: Maverick*; the music-heavy features *Babylon* and *Elvis*; and the genre-bending *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.

Some context: 2009's *Avatar* was nominated for both sound editing and mixing, and 1986's *Top Gun* also was nominated in the sound categories, then called best sound and best sound effects editing. *Black Panther* earned nominations in sound editing and mixing in 2018. Even the caped crusader previously factored into the sound race: Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* won for sound editing in 2009.

Margot Robbie in Paramount's *Babylon*, shortlisted for sound.

Musicals and musical films also have a recent track record in sound. The Freddie Mercury biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody* won both sound categories in 2018, and nominees have included *Babylon* helmer Damien Chazelle's *La La Land* and, earlier this year, Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story*.

Among the individuals to watch in this category is two-time Oscar-winning rerecording mixer Andy Nelson, who with 22 Academy Award nominations holds the record for the most noms in sound and is currently tied with Randy Newman for the third-most noms among living people. This year, his sound work is shortlisted for *Babylon*, *The Batman* and *Elvis*.

From here, branch members will be able to view excerpts from each of the 10 shortlisted films beginning Jan. 12 in the Bay Area, followed by New York, London and Los Angeles, before they vote on the five nominees. THR

PINOCCHIO: COURTESY OF NETFLIX. *QUIET*: REINER BAJO/NETFLIX. *MOONAGE*: COURTESY OF NEON. *BABYLON*: COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES.

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Style

Real Estate

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Inside Atlanta's Booming Home Market

Real estate prices have increased 10 percent year-over-year in Georgia's biggest city, as film and television spending hit a record high: 'There's really something for everybody' *By Hadley Meares*

In the past decade, Atlanta has earned the moniker Hollywood of the South. The city boasts a population of around 500,000 in Atlanta proper and roughly 6 million in the greater metro area, with a rising number of full-time and part-time residents who are entertainment industry professionals. Many have been lured to work on productions like *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, *The Walking Dead* and the new *Father of the Bride*, or to find more stable work at the 700-acre Trilith Studios or Tyler Perry Studios in the heart of Atlanta.

Perry

Long a mecca for hip-hop artists and Black creators, Atlanta has also become increasingly popular with public figures from all walks of life. The undisputed media king of Atlanta — **Tyler Perry** — recently completed an astounding $100 million estate on 2,100 acres in the city of Douglasville, near his 330-acre studio complex. Celebrities who live or have had homes in Atlanta include **Elton John**, **Melissa McCarthy**, **Ludacris**, **André 3000**, **Norman Reedus**, **Cardi B**, **Shaquille O'Neal**, **Gucci Mane**, **Jane Fonda** and *The Vampire Diaries* co-creator **Julie Plec**. **Whitney Houston** was also a longtime resident; the Alpharetta home where she and **Bobby Brown** shot *Being Bobby Brown* is on the market for $1.9 million.

This rise in status and cachet has helped lead to a booming real estate market. Along with ample work opportunities and Southern hospitality, Atlanta offers luxury real estate at a fraction of the price of Los Angeles or New York. According to Rocket Homes, in November 2022, the median price of homes sold was $395,322, a 10.8 percent increase over 2021. The median price for five-bedroom-plus homes is $1.2 million.

This five-bedroom 1920s Georgian Revival residence in Atlanta's Buckhead neighborhood, owned by novelist Emily Giffin (*Something Borrowed*), is listed with Glennis Beacham of Beacham & Company.

According to **Shanna Bradley** of Ansley Atlanta Real Estate, the luxury market is particularly on fire right now — though overall home prices across the city slightly declined in November compared to the previous month. In the exclusive neighborhood of Buckhead, lavish estates are on the market for $4 million to $6 million, boasting amenities comparable with a $15 million home in Los Angeles. Bradley holds the $5.995 million listing on **Mariah Carey**'s palatial Buckhead estate, which includes nine bedrooms and a recording studio. Another Buckhead standout currently on the market is the home of best-selling author **Emily Giffin**, whose 1920s mansion is listed for $8.99 million.

"Comparatively speaking to other markets, we have been relatively affordable," says **Christa Huffstickler**, CEO of luxury brokerage Engel & Völkers Atlanta.

Bradley agrees. "I think the current market is driven by the fact that a lot of people are still moving here from other places where the real estate is so much more expensive," she says.

The sprawling Atlanta metro area offers varied real estate, from charming 1920s cottages to modern mansions by the likes of **Robert Green**, an apprentice of **Frank Lloyd Wright**. "There's this plethora of the types of jobs

$5M
3655 Paces Ferry Drive NW

Listed with Sam Bayne of Atlanta Fine Homes Sotheby's International Realty, this 1937 residence in Buckhead sits on 4-plus acres.

$1.2–$2.6M
40 West 12th

A model residence at a new 64-unit condo tower in Midtown.

that go into what is the film and production industry, from set designers to cameramen to all these different jobs that are a part of that industry. And not everybody in those jobs is making $2 million or $3 million or $5 million a film," says Huffstickler. "We have a diversity of neighborhoods and product types, and there's a fit for everyone."

Arthur Lewis, partner and creative director of UTA Fine Arts/Artist Space, notes that "over the last decade, Atlanta has become a leader in motion picture production and is a bastion for tech startups and a mainstay for major companies like Coca-Cola, Delta Air Lines and UPS. Additionally, Atlanta has one of the highest LGBTQIA+ populations per capita and the second-largest Black metropolitan area in the United States, making it an extremely diverse city." In 2023, UTA will open an Artist Space in Atlanta, its second after the one in Beverly Hills.

Brian McGowan, president of Centennial Yards Company, a mixed-use development covering 50 acres of a former Atlanta rail yard, adds that the amount of film and television production in the area, combined with the city's hip-hop music scene, makes Atlanta "a cultural hub where people want to be if you want to influence culture direction." In fiscal year 2022, entertainment productions spent $4.4 billion in Georgia, a record high — despite some talk that Hollywood would boycott the state over its six-week abortion ban that passed in 2019.

Atlanta's central location and the beauty of the South have drawn 65,000 new residents in 2022, leading to a seller's market.

Rendering of a mixed-use building at the Centennial Yards project in Midtown. Atlanta Hawks owner Tony Ressler, husband of actress Jami Gertz, is one of the project's main investors.

"We're a couple of hours to mountains. We're a couple of hours to the beach. The busiest airport in the world is in our city. So the connectivity to a lot of different components as a major metropolitan city has been really attractive," says Huffstickler. "We are green, and we have trees, and we have parks. We have the best restaurants. There's really something for everybody, I think, in Atlanta. And as a result, we've just seen the growth of this city moving at exponential speed."

Lewis

Midtown and downtown Atlanta — long something of an economically depressed cultural wasteland — are also having a renaissance. New high-rises featuring lock-and-leave pied-à-terre condos have proved popular with young tech employees, aging boomers and entertainment industry workers. The Flats, a luxury condo community offering short-term rentals attached to the sprawling Ponce City Market, has become particularly popular with actors, among them **Ed Helms**, **Gabrielle Union** and **Jon Hamm**.

One of the most ambitious projects in the Midtown area is Centennial Yards, scheduled to be completed in the next decade. "The project will be 8 million square feet mixed-use office, residential, commercial, so roughly 4 million square feet of residential, 4 million square feet of everything else," says McGowan. "And then the heart of it will be a sports and entertainment hub. It will be a district that will have bars and restaurants and live music and venues. You will want to come to downtown Atlanta before games and before events and stay after them because there'll be something to do."

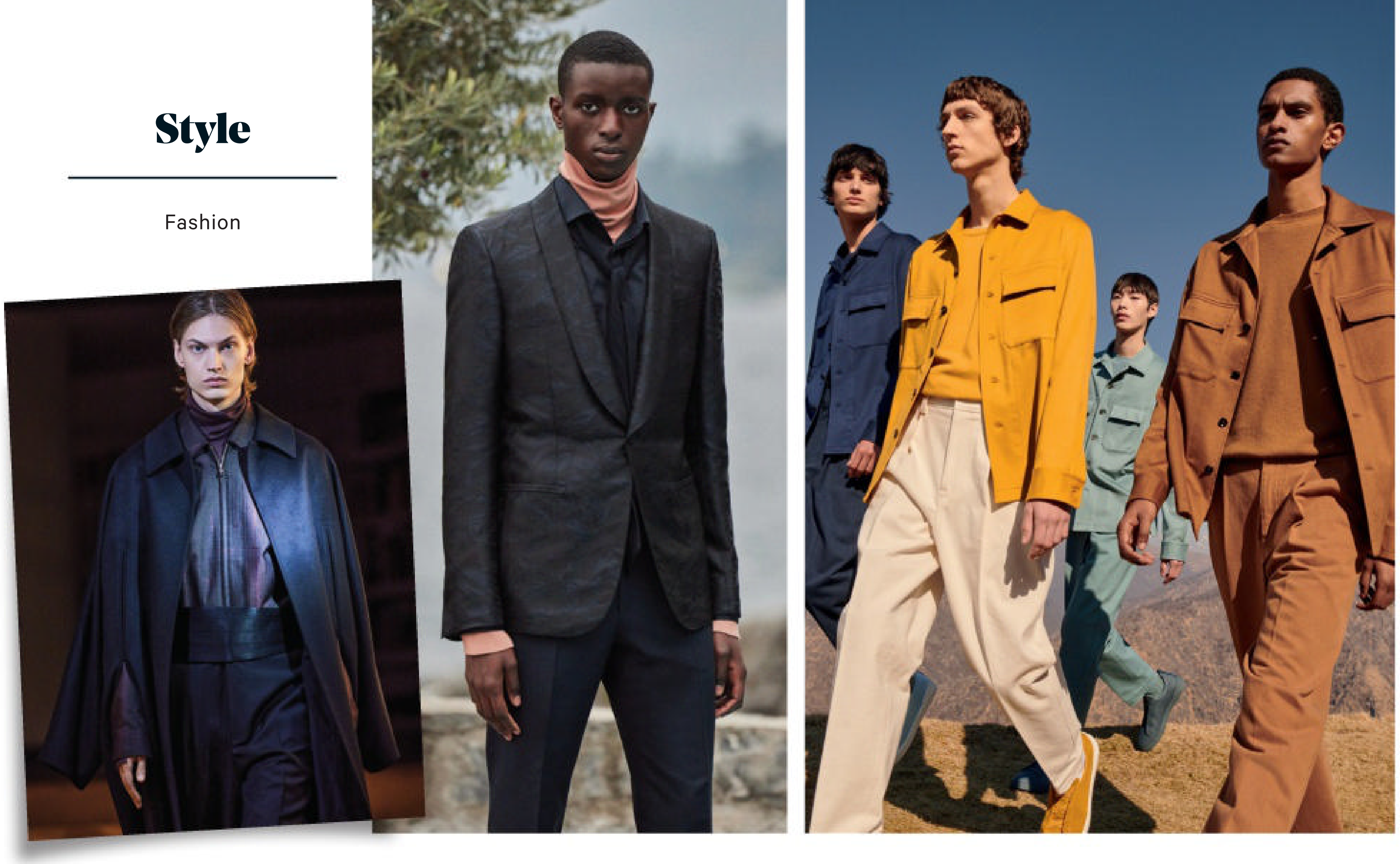
Other large-scale projects include the scheduled $150 million transformation of downtown's Five Points Station, the hub of MARTA, Atlanta's mass transit system. Underground Atlanta, downtown's historic shopping and entertainment district, is also undergoing a massive redevelopment under the guidance of architecture firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Two new mixed-use residential towers in South Downtown developed by Newport RE are scheduled to open in 2025.

But as Atlanta rises further as a high-end metropolis, many of its residents believe it is the city's laid-back Southern charm that draws everyone from stars and music producers to grips to the area. "That 'Hey y'all,' and being able to greet people with a smile is something that is really refreshing and that is culturally distinct to the South," says Huffstickler. "I think what celebrities like about being in Atlanta is that we've grown into a big city that still feels like a small town." THR

$6M
855 Davis Drive NW

Mariah Carey's nine-bedroom home in Buckhead sits on 4 acres complete with a pool, pool house and tennis courts.

330 ARGONNE DRIVE: COURTESY OF BEACHAM & COMPANY (2). PERRY: PHILLIP FARAONE/GETTY IMAGES FOR BABY2BABY. 3655 PACES FERRY ROAD: COURTESY OF ATLANTA FINE HOMES SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY. 40 WEST 12TH: DAVID MITCHELL. CENTENNIAL YARDS: DBOX FOR CENTENNIAL YARDS. LEWIS: STEFANIE KEENAN/GETTY IMAGES. CAREY LISTING: JON-MICHAEL SULLIVAN AND BARTOLOTTI MEDIA – JOSHUA BARTOLOTTI. CAREY: STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE.



From left: Looks from Zegna's Red Carpet Collection include a cashmere cloak coat worn over a bomber jacket and a silk jacquard print tuxedo paired with a dusty rose cashmere-and-silk turtleneck; Zegna's Oasi Cashmere collection includes overshirts in a range of colors ($2,490, *zegna.com*).

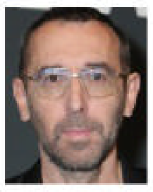
Red Carpet Relaxes With New Zegna

The Hollywood-loved Italian luxury menswear house, led by artistic director Alessandro Sartori, launches a VIP collection featuring soft fabrics inspired by leisurewear: 'We're evolving the classic outfit' ***By Chris Gardner***

It's been a season of change for the brand formerly known as Ermenegildo Zegna, which went public on Dec. 20, 2021, a rarity for an Italian fashion house, let alone one founded in 1910. With the listing on the New York Stock Exchange (traded as ZGN) came a new attitude as the house consolidated its three lines (Ermenegildo Zegna, Zegna Couture and sportswear label Z Zegna) into a single luxury collection with the Zegna moniker and a revamped logo.

Under the stewardship of creative director **Alessandro Sartori**, who rejoined the company in 2016 after a five-year stint at Berluti, now comes a new Red Carpet Collection. Arriving in time for awards season, the collection comprises 20 outfits and some 100 pieces, including accessories and shoes. Beyond tuxedos, dinner jackets and a lux cashmere cape coat, it also features relaxed formalwear like a dusty pink set and suave turtlenecks that Sartori says speak to the shift in how people are dressing these days amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“ 'Comfort' became the key word in fashion,” explains Sartori during an interview with *THR* in the VIP space of Zegna's Rodeo Drive boutique, noting that the brand listened to its customers and tailored designs and fabrics (more knitwear, jersey and cashmere) to the new normal. That shift — also a boom for Zegna's bottom line as leisurewear accounted for 50 percent of its sales in 2021 — is reflected in the pieces that still feature the expert tailoring Zegna is known for, but with new silhouettes and fabrics that can more easily shift from day to night or from the awards show to the afterparty.



Sartori

During the course of an event, “some of the traditional pieces can feel too rigid,” offers Sartori, emphasizing the lightness and wearability of the new pieces, which are available now for VIPs and will be in stores Sept. 23. “That's why we're evolving the classic red carpet outfit and adding elements.”

Sartori also is passionate about the house's commitment to eco-conscious production and traceable cashmere (meaning that it's responsibly sourced) as well as Zegna's made-to-measure operations, noting that the house can design anything custom for clients and ship worldwide in four weeks “door-to-door.” Speaking of clients, Zegna always has had strong ties in Hollywood with a roster of friends of the brand that has included **Javier Bardem**, **Mahershala Ali**, **Daniel Brühl** and **Adrien Brody**.

Sartori also tells *THR* that Zegna (which also owns Thom Browne) will be departing its current address at 337 N. Rodeo Drive, home for nearly a decade, for a remodeled space up the block on Rodeo near Saint Laurent.

Sartori says the new digs will be “warmer but in a light way with a beautiful lounge area,” all featuring Italian furniture and decor “with a new and exclusive facade” that takes inspiration from the weaving of fabrics. Plans have been underway for more than a year, and he expects the new Rodeo boutique to open in June.

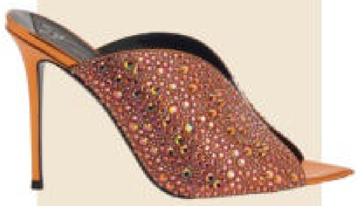
“Los Angeles is one of the cities where we wanted to put this new concept on display as soon as possible,” explains Sartori, who started his career at Ermenegildo Zegna in 1989 before being elevated to run Z Zegna from 2003 to 2011. “And we love the street.”

When the shop opens, the house's transformation will be complete. “The new branding, the logo, the collection, the silhouettes and the store design — boom,” Sartori says, snapping his fingers. “Everything has arrived at the level of speed, traction and quality that we want. This is what the Zegna of today is about.” THR

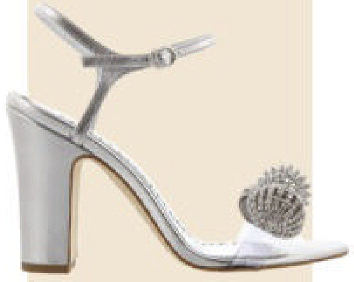
From left: Javier Bardem at the Oscars, Andrew Garfield at the Emmys, Nicholas Braun at the AFI Awards luncheon and John Legend at the Grammys, all in Zegna.

SHOE NEWS

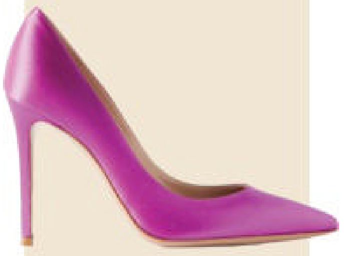
Hot Heels for Awards Season



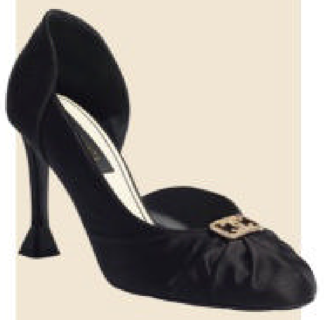
Giuseppe Zanotti
Intriigo Sparkle mule; $1,495, *giuseppezanotti.com*



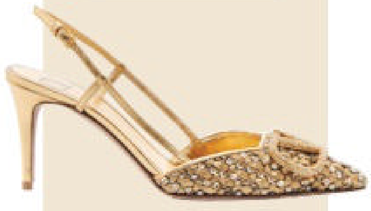
Manolo Blahnik
Elhob sandal with disco-ball detail; $1,545, *manoloblahnik.com*



Gianvito Rossi
Fuchsia glossy satin pump; $775, *net-a-porter.com*



Chanel
Black satin pump with double-C logo; $1,450, at Chanel, Beverly Hills



Valentino
Vlogo Signature slingback pump in metallic gold leather; $2,490, at Valentino, Beverly Hills

— LAURIE BROOKINS

SHOES: COURTESY OF BRAND (5). SARTORI: MICHAEL LOCCISANO/GETTY IMAGES. BARDEM: DAVID LIVINGSTON/GETTY IMAGES. GARFIELD: GILBERT FLORES/VARIETY VIA GETTY IMAGES. BRAUN: MOMODU MANSARAY/FILMMAGIC. LEGEND: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR THE RECORDING ACADEMY. ZENGA LOOKS: COURTESY OF ZEGNA (3).

THE Hollywood REPORTER

THE HEARTBEAT OF THE CITY

COVERING THE CREATIVE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Craig Mazin looks exasperated. The *Last of Us* showrunner just finished a marathon press junket for his upcoming HBO zombie drama, and every reporter that trotted into his hotel suite asked him the same question. “Literally all day long,” he marvels. “Over and over. They even phrased it the same way.”

What are the challenges of adapting a video game?

Which is fine, as questions go. But it’s actually the polite version of the real question, which is this: Can you make a dramatic adaptation of a video game that doesn’t disappoint like all the rest of them have?

After all, Hollywood has been attempting to alchemize games into movies and TV shows for decades — from *Street Fighter* to *Doom* to *Halo* to *Assassin’s Creed* — and the result has been billions of pixels of *meh*.

In this case, however, the answer to the question Mazin kept being asked should be clear to anybody who played 2013’s cinematic *The Last of Us*, which follows a hard-case survivor named Joel tasked with smuggling special “cargo” — a teenage girl named Ellie — across a post-apocalyptic, zombie-filled former United States.

“The way to break the video game curse is to adapt the best video game story ever — not by a little, but by a lot,” Mazin says. “So I flat-out cheated.”

The Last of Us’ complex, emotionally wrenching storyline seems ideal for a debut season of television. The series, co-produced by Sony and premiering Jan. 15, is toplined by two *Game of Thrones* veterans — Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey — and could

CAN HBO'S ELEVATED ZOMBIE DRAMA **THE LAST OF US**, STARRING **PEDRO PASCAL** AND **BELLA RAMSEY**, OVERCOME HOLLYWOOD'S STREAK OF BAD VIDEO GAME ADAPTATIONS TO BECOME THE NETWORK'S NEXT MONSTER HIT?

'WE PUT ALL OF OURSELVES INTO THIS'

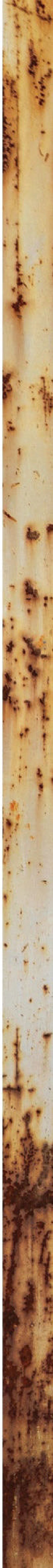
BY
JAMES HIBBERD

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
RYAN PFLUGER

The Last of Us stars Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey were photographed Dec. 6 at Dust Studios in Los Angeles. "Nothing was easy," Pascal says of the shoot. "Long hours, rough material, and we were both scared about meeting people's expectations."

Ramsey styled by Leith Clark
Sandro shirt, Margaret Howell tee, Mejuri ring.

Pascal styled by Fabio Immediato
Caruso jacket, Dolce & Gabbana shirt, trousers, boots.



very well become HBO's Next Big Thing at a time when competition for the prestige TV streaming crown is fiercer than ever and belt-tightening cuts have made every major series launch really count. But it was a minor miracle the game was made in the first place, and now it's become a show that somehow must get everything right — or risk becoming the gaming industry's biggest Hollywood disappointment yet.

The assignment was to pitch a zombie story for a computer class at Carnegie Mellon in 2004. The project's judge was legendary director George Romero, who made 1968's *Night of the Living Dead*, a film widely credited with spawning the zombie genre. And a computer science student named Neil Druckmann thought he had a decent idea.

Taking inspiration from an obscure two-character PlayStation 2 game called *Ico* and the character John Hartigan (Frank Miller's tough protagonist from *Sin City*), Druckmann sketched a story of a man who lost his daughter and a girl who lost her father, who team up.

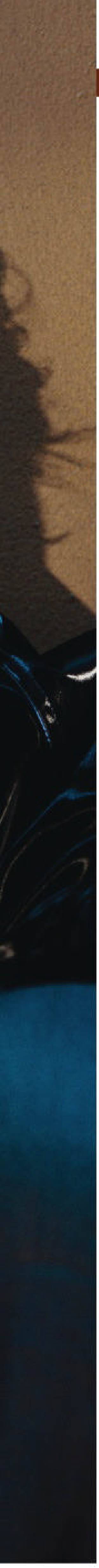
Druckmann's professor pitched the idea to Romero. "And he didn't like it," recalls Druckmann, still looking amused and mildly surprised after all these years. "He picked something else."

The idea languished; Druckmann's career didn't. He was hired by acclaimed gaming company Naughty Dog and worked his way up to land the plum gig of co-lead designer and co-writer on the first sequel to the Indiana Jones-like adventure game *Uncharted*. The result, 2009's *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, was a massive hit, and Druckmann found himself in the enviable position of being able to pick his next project. He returned to his zombie idea, which he had fleshed out into a graphic novel.

While "zombie survival horror" is an easy way to categorize *The Last of Us* — and there are indeed terrifying mutated ex-human "clickers" controlled by a parasitic fungus roaming about — it's also a reductive description. Druckmann's influences are relationship stories set against apocalyptic backgrounds, such as the film *Children of Men* and the novel *City of Thieves* by David Benioff (of *Game of Thrones* fame).

"We wanted to do the opposite of *Resident Evil* — which I love, but it's so over-the-top and you're fighting giant spiders and it's all about enemy variety," Druckmann says. "What if it's about intimate relationships — an exploration of the unconditional love a parent feels for their child and the beautiful things that could come out of that and the really horrible things that could come out of that?"

When *The Last of Us* was released on PlayStation 3 in 2013, it became the fastest-selling game in years and was heralded as one of the finest ever made, the game and its sequel eventually selling more than 37 million copies. Among the many industry assumptions that the game overturned was the notion that a non-sexualized female protagonist would hinder sales. Hollywood was interested. "One production company said, 'You guys are really good with gameplay, we'll take the story from here and refine it,' " Druckmann says. "I'm like, 'They don't respect what's there. They just see it as a marketing opportunity.' "



Druckmann eventually developed his own movie adaptation with Screen Gems; Sam Raimi was attached to direct. Yet he struggled to compress the game's roughly 15 hours of play into a feature-length narrative. "Sam gave really solid notes, but it was an impossible task," he says. Druckmann was also told to add more spectacular action set pieces — "Think *World War Z*" — which was precisely the opposite of the game's character-driven road-trip vibe.

Druckmann began hoping his film version would die. Eventually, he got his wish. The rights reverted to Naughty Dog, where Druckmann was on his way to co-president. He figured an adaptation wasn't going to happen. Then he saw HBO's *Chernobyl*.

To put Craig Mazin's career in video game terms, he'd been doing screenwriting on "hard mode" for decades. He worked in the feature comedy writing and punch-up space, earning credits on the *Hangover* and *Scary Movie* franchises (plus uncredited work on so many projects that he's lost count). He turned his experiences into a popular screenwriting podcast with John August (*Scriptnotes*) and gave his writer-producer friends David Benioff and Dan Weiss one of the more notable critiques in TV development history after they showed him their original train-wreck pilot for *Game of Thrones*: "You guys have a massive problem." (Taking his advice, they reshot it.)

Chernobyl was the first project Mazin considered truly his own. The gripping limited series about the 1986 Soviet Union nuclear plant disaster earned Mazin an HBO overall deal and won 10 Emmys. Compared to grinding out joke-a-minute comedy scripts, Mazin has quipped that *Chernobyl* was the easiest thing he ever wrote.

When Druckmann saw *Chernobyl*, with its grounded atmospheric tension and depiction of a struggle for survival and moral clarity amid a fallout Exclusion Zone, he could suddenly envision how *The Last of Us* might look and feel as a TV show.

Left: Joel (Pascal) with his daughter (Nico Parker). The actor, who has no children, says, "I've only learned through these characters how painfully vulnerable one becomes and how much your life depends on their life being OK." Right: Gabriel Luna plays Joel's brother, Tommy.

Set up by a mutual friend, actress Shannon Woodward, Druckmann and Mazin had lunch in Santa Monica to feel each other out. Druckmann comes across chill and contemplative. Mazin is passionate and loquacious. Yet the duo meshed on the broad strokes of *The Last of Us* as a potential HBO drama.

"What would this process look like?" Druckmann asked tentatively.

"We go across the street," Mazin replied, projecting full confidence. "I tell HBO I want this to be our next project. And we make it!"

In truth, Mazin's level of certainty wasn't quite so high. He says he had emailed the network's chairman and CEO, Casey Bloys: "Please let me do this. Please, please, please ..."

The gaming guru and the Hollywood screenwriter sat down with Bloys, HBO drama head Francesca Orsi and producer Carolyn Strauss. Druckmann had zero expectations, other than that he'd have to explain his game to some studio executives for the millionth time.

"Then Craig just launches into the game's story from the beginning," Druckmann recalls. "And I'm like, 'Do I jump in?' And I'm like, 'What if I do nothing?' "

Mazin dramatically unspooled a tale of parental love amid a treacherous wasteland, ever mindful of one of his hard-earned industry lessons: Don't pitch plot, pitch passion.

Druckmann leaned back and folded his arms, stunned. "He's such a good storyteller, I was finding myself emotionally moved by a story that — for all intents and purposes — I shouldn't be moved by anymore," he says. "I realized that this is what I got wrong every other time — I didn't have the right partner."

HBO bought *The Last of Us* in the room.

Admits Bloys: "I'm not a gamer; the last video game I played was on ColecoVision. My mind wasn't on whether video game adaptations in the past have failed. I approached this as: Is it a great TV show? And I loved [Danny Boyle's 2002 zombie film] *28 Days Later*. So the idea that Craig wanted to do a big genre show was not a hard sell for me."

The newly minted showrunner partners got to work writing a first season, taking turns on the scripts, and casting. The toughest role to fill, they knew, would be the girl at the center of everything: an adult actress who could convincingly play a 14-year-old that the gaming world had fallen in love with — and had very firm ideas about.

Bella Ramsey was supposed to have only one scene on *Game of Thrones*. The English actor was 11 years old when she shot her professional acting debut in the fantasy hit as the ferocious Lady Lyanna Mormont. Yet she was such a scene-stealer that the showrunners brought the character back for the final two seasons.

Ramsey, now 19, went on to roles in several other genre projects, like HBO's fantasy drama *His Dark Materials* and the medieval comedy movie *Catherine Called Birdy*. But when she had the chance to audition for *The Last of Us*, she hesitated.

Ramsey was once asked her zombie apocalypse strategy and said she'd "probably just dig myself a hole, crawl into it." The prospect of being the lead of an HBO series with millions of preexisting fans around the world made Ramsey feel the same way.

"I seriously considered that maybe I don't want to be famous so I'm not going to do this show because it's going to propel me to a place I don't want to go to in terms of being seen and being known," Ramsey says. "I like to blend in and hide."

Finding Ellie had always been a high bar. The show needed somebody who could appear "tough and vulnerable and wise beyond their years and also have a potential for violence," Druckmann says. They saw "dozens and dozens" for the part. Ramsey's *Thrones* co-star Maisie Williams had a chat with Druckmann about the movie adaptation very early on. Kaitlyn Dever (*Booksmart*) even did a table read. By the time the HBO series came along, any former possible candidates had aged out of consideration, so the search had to be reset.

When Mazin watched Ramsey's tape, he says, he was instantly all in. "Bella felt so real," Druckmann agrees. "It was like Ellie realized in live action. It didn't feel like watching an actor." Mazin reached out to Benioff and Weiss, who assured them that Ramsey was "an absolute joy on set" in every episode she appeared in.

Ramsey went from audition to securing the role in less than a month — lightning fast for a nonhousehold name vying for the lead in a tentpole project.

Yet when she arrived at the show's set in Alberta, Ramsey initially had a rough time, sitting in COVID quarantine for two weeks, spiraling. "What am I doing here?" Ramsey recalls thinking. " 'You've chosen the wrong person' — all of that goes around in your head." Her predicament was like how viewers first meet Ellie

PREVIOUS SPREAD: SET DESIGN: EAMONN MCGLYNN. RAMSEY HAIR: KILEY FITZGERALD AT A-FRAME AGENCY, MAKEUP: PIRCILLA PAE AT A-FRAME AGENCY. PASCAL GROOMER: MIRA CHAI HYDE. THIS SPREAD: *LAST*: COURTESY OF HBO (2).

in the series — a prisoner chained in a room for weeks, worried about what comes next.

The internet, being the internet, didn't help. Ellie had been fan-casted for a decade and some cruelly picked apart all the ways they assumed Ramsey was wrong for the role. Ramsey pledged not to look at the comments, then looked anyway.

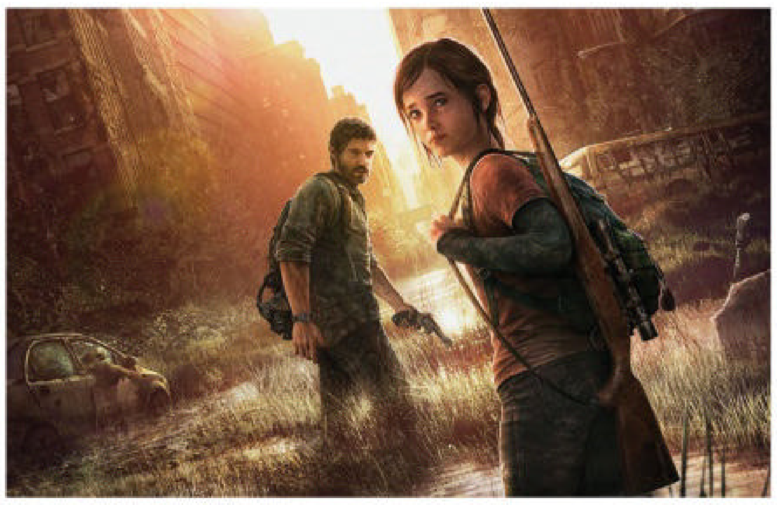
"I've seen everything," Ramsey says, with a note of steely "and fuck you all" defiance familiar to anyone who watched Lyanna Mormont dress down Jon Snow. "I'm aware of all of it. It was my first experience, really, with a lot of negative reactions."

What kept Ramsey going was her reason for taking the role in the first place. "Ellie felt like a character I already had in me," Ramsey says. "Like the skins that you wear in a video game? She was one of my skins already."

It didn't take any effort for producers to imagine Pedro Pascal in the role of Joel, the game's stoic, action-ready hero. The 47-year-old Chilean American had already become a TV fan favorite playing empathic tough-guy characters on *Game of Thrones* (his breakout performance as season four's swaggering Prince Oberyn Martell), Netflix's *Narcos* (starring as a DEA agent for two seasons) and Disney+'s *The Mandalorian* (playing the helmeted title character).

When Mazin sent Pascal the *Last of Us* script, the actor says, he wanted the part so badly it literally scared him that it might not work out. Playing a warrior protecting a special young ward on a journey across a dangerous fantasy landscape on a prestige TV show sounded terrific. The only potential hiccup was that he was kind of already doing that.

"We talked about the fact that he was in *The Mandalorian*," Mazin says. "And you can do the math like: Mandalorian = Joel; Baby Yoda = ... but then you realize, actually, no. It's not the same. *The Mandalorian* is interacting with a mute, adorable creature — and I love that show. But interacting with a teenager is complicated. Also, the fact they have him covered in a helmet is a huge factor."



Top: Ramsey as Ellie with Anna Torv. Druckmann says seeing her audition tape "was like Ellie realized in live action." Bottom: A still from Druckmann's original 2013 PlayStation 3 game, to which the HBO series adheres closely.

Below: "Ellie felt like a character I already had in me," says Ramsey. "Like the skins that you wear in a video game? She was one of my skins already."

Pascal was conscious of the comparison as well, but it didn't deter his interest.

"It definitely came to mind," he says. "As I [got familiar with the game], I noticed there are so many things I've seen that visually or thematically reference *The Last of Us*. Like [the 2017 X-Men movie] *Logan*. And yes, the trope has been used in so many different ways — you can go back to [the manga series] *Lone Wolf and Cub*, you can go to *Paper Moon*. But as far as *Mandalorian* and *The Last of Us* existing in close proximity, for me, it's the best double-dipping I could possibly imagine."

Still, the actor had to get permission from the *Mandalorian* producers, who "very generously" allowed him to work on a rival company's project. The situation was likely aided by the fact that his *Star Wars* character is physically played by more than one actor, allowing Pascal to simply dub dialogue in postproduction.

"[Producers] Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni are creatively not limiting themselves to the way things are normally done," Pascal says, choosing his words carefully. "We've improvised making myself available for whatever they need. I hesitate revealing anything because I don't want any plot surprises to be spoiled."

Yet even Pascal's casting came with a bit of uproar. Mazin says fans griped that the actor cannot grow a full beard, which just shows the level of fidelity some expect. "You're laughing, but for some people that's a serious deal-breaker for them!" Mazin says. "They're like, 'Oh my God, he can't even have the same beard as Joel in the game.' "

Pascal and Ramsey were a bit apprehensive about what came next: getting stuck with mainly the same scene partner for nearly a year of filming, especially given their age difference and the show's intimate father-daughter dynamic. They'd never had a

Thom Browne shirt, Mejuri ring.

chemistry read or even spoken. Instead — and with some degree of shared cringe — the duo first met on the production's sexual harassment prevention Zoom call. Later, Pascal reached out to Ramsey's mother and the actor to get their working relationship going, and recalls thinking in that awkward moment: "How am I going to text a 17-year-old?"

Once on set in Calgary, the duo faced extreme weather (dipping down to minus 20 degrees at one point) and became an odd-couple pairing that couldn't help but mimic their onscreen relationship to some extent, especially with the season shot in largely chronological order. "Nothing was easy, it was super hard," Pascal says. "Long hours, rough material, and we were both scared about meeting people's expectations."

Their biggest shared stress was pulling off certain moments from the game. Ramsey recalls ruminating about one iconic scene for months. "I would wake up in the night thinking about it," she says. "I'd lose sleep over it because I felt like I could have done it better."

LAST (SHOW): COURTESY OF HBO. LAST (GAME): COURTESY OF SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT. DRUCKMANN: GABE GINSBERG/FILMMAGIC. MAZIN: ROY ROCHLIN/GETTY IMAGES FOR TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL.

The Last of Us creator Neil Druckmann (left) with showrunner Craig Mazin.

Pascal advises, more than a little Yoda-like, that feelings of satisfaction are deceptive, anyway. "You walk away satisfied from something, a rare thing, and you could be right or you could be wrong," he tells Ramsey. "The results are what the results are."

It's not surprising that when asked for his zombie apocalypse strategy, Pascal replies, "to find somebody like Bella." I point out the actor frequently plays protective figures in his roles.

"There is something interesting there," Pascal agrees. "You start to recognize a thread between your characters that you didn't necessarily look for, but got cast in. I don't have kids. I've only learned through these characters how painfully vulnerable one becomes and how much your life depends on their life being OK. It's a fun fantasy to fulfill, and I'll play as many dads as I can get."

While *The Last of Us* doesn't face the same amount of pressure as, for instance, *House of the Dragon* as a make-or-break title for HBO (and costs less than *Dragon*'s sub-$20 million per-episode budget), Bloys points out that the drama is unusual in the way the entire series hinges on whether Pascal and Ramsey can convince viewers their onscreen relationship is genuine. "If those two don't work, the show doesn't work," Bloys says. "But I think it's pretty clear from the beginning they're both incredibly soulful and give extraordinary performances. The love that has to develop between these two characters for you to care was there in spades."

The Last of Us doesn't merely fulfill the promise of elevated survival horror, but it also does a trick that HBO seems to regularly pull off: Just when you think you know exactly what the show is, there's an episode that rises well above expectation. In this case, this head-turning hour arrives early, with its third episode. No spoilers, but it involves a fan-favorite character from the game — a hard-core survivalist named Bill (Nick Offerman) — and some radical changes to the game's story that will shock and perhaps challenge fans.

The deviation won't be the show's last, but overall the series is highly faithful to the game, with much of the dialogue intact and many familiar settings rendered precisely into reality. Still, Druckmann and Mazin worry, like Ramsey and Pascal, about letting fans down. For Druckmann, his concern isn't just about the fate of the show, but public perception of his entire industry.

"People see bad adaptations and it adds credence to the idea that games are childish," he says. "I love the idea that someone could watch this and be moved by it and then be like, 'Wait, that's based on the video game?' "

Adds Mazin: "I don't want to see the story done poorly any more than [the game's fans] do. Give us the chance, I think they will be just as rewarded — in a different way, but just as rewarded."

One of those rewards is the show's vein of dark, dry humor. Since the end of *Thrones*, fantasy TV has attempted to replicate its blockbuster success, only with a more gravely solemn style.

"I'm an existentialist, and I think part of being human is pointing out how fucking absurd this all is," Mazin says. "In a dire situation, humor is where you hang on to your humanity."

The show also doesn't stay embedded in its ruinous present. The narrative spends a fair amount of time flashing back to events surrounding the initial outbreak — the "world is falling apart" roller coaster that most postapocalyptic shows skip quickly past.

"I'm not … how do I put this?" Mazin says, hesitating, and then deciding to say it anyway: "I'm not interested in the zombies! I care about people … and one of the nice things about television is you get to begin and end [characters' stories] over and over again, and beginnings and endings are the best."

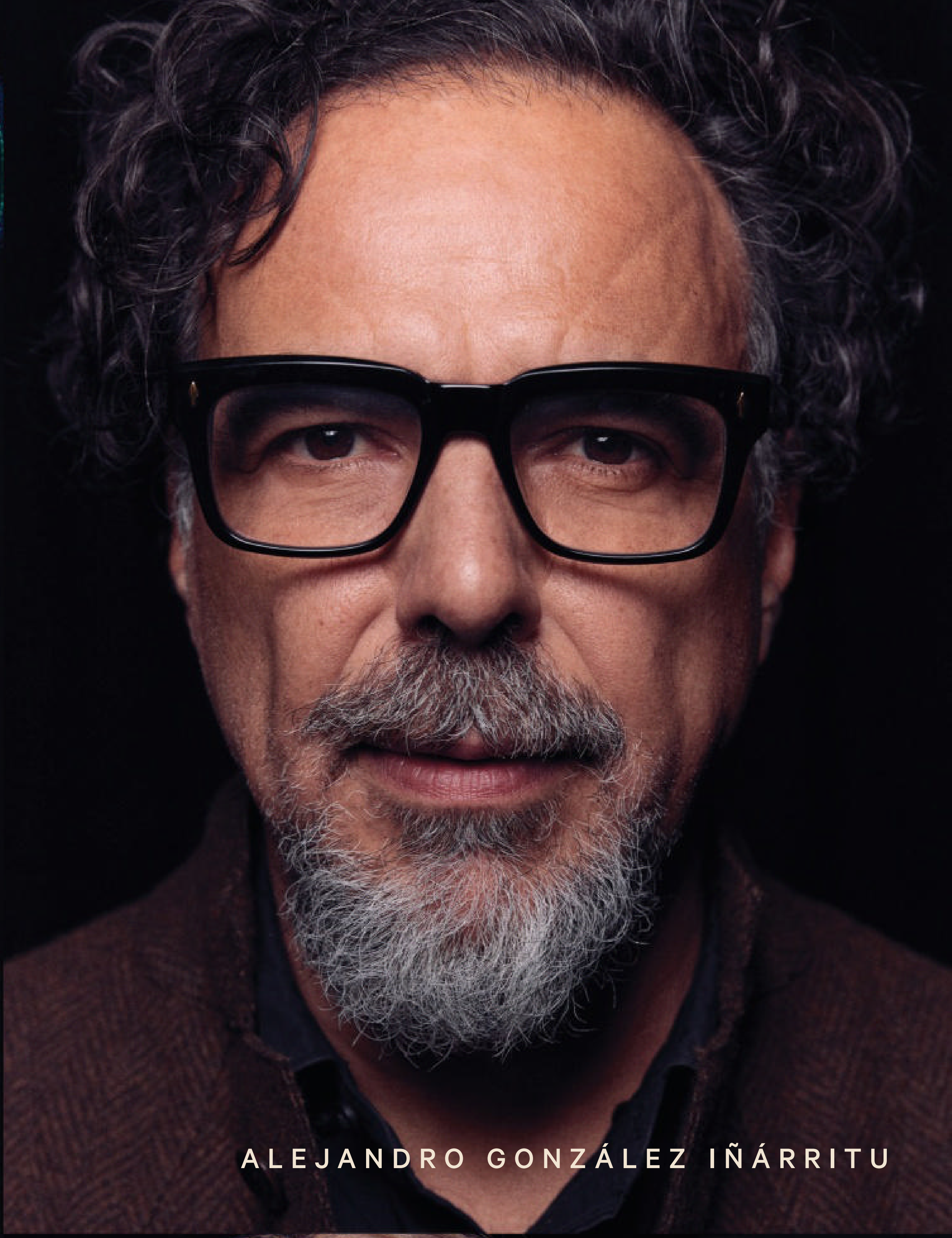
As for this show's ending, expect the debut season to cover the entirety of the *Last of Us* game. Druckmann and Mazin hint — but don't outright say — that their second season will cover the table-flipping narrative of Naughty Dog's bold *Part II* sequel ("I don't like filler," Mazin says). *Part II* cannot be described without spoilers, but it caused such an uproar that Druckmann received death threats.

Likewise, Druckmann cannot reveal whether a rumored *Part III* game from Naughty Dog is coming, but says: "I think there's more story to tell."

That said, neither wants a show that's season after season of endlessly weary survivors trudging endlessly through decaying buildings wary of mushroom zombies — that's an undead fate all its own.

"I don't have any interest in a spinning-plates-go-on-forever show," Mazin says. (He doesn't say "like *The Walking Dead*" here, but I do.) "When it becomes a perpetual motion machine, it just can't help but get kind of … stupid. Endings mean everything to me." THR

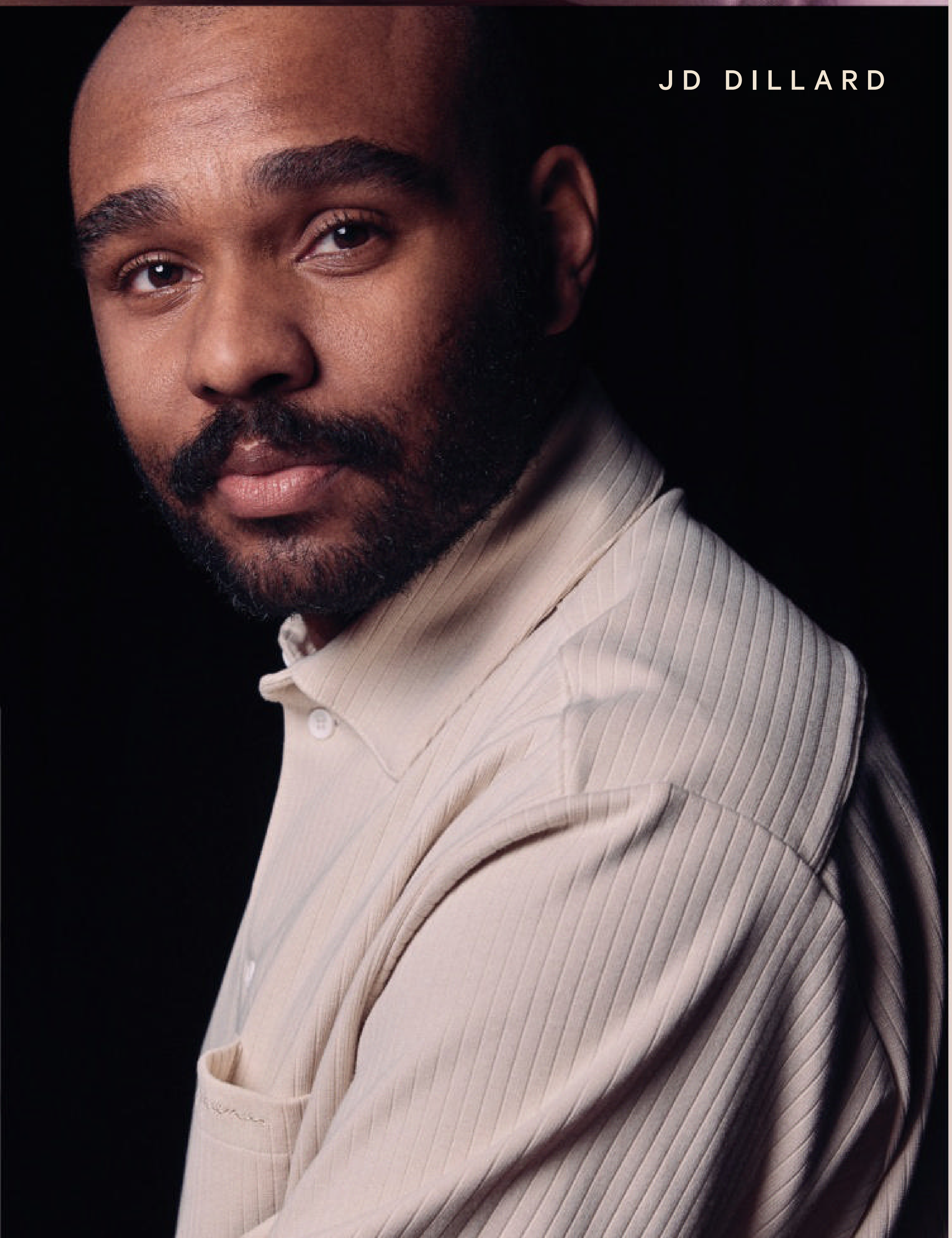
TODD FIELD


ALEJANDRO GONZÁLEZ IÑÁRRITU

JOSEPH KOSINSKI

SARAH POLLEY

GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD


JD DILLARD

THR ROUND TABLE : DIRECTORS

"You Have to Have a Need"

The year's top directors swap trade secrets — including how Tom Cruise greenlit *Top Gun: Maverick*, taking a chance on actors who are bad at auditions and the lengths these helmers will go, including self-financing: 'There is a set number of films you'll make'

By **REBECCA KEEGAN**
Photographed by **CHARLES W. MURPHY**

THR's Director Roundtable participants were photographed Dec. 4 at PMC Studios in Los Angeles.

Clockwise from bottom: *THR* moderator Rebecca Keegan, Polley, Kosinski, Dillard, Iñárritu, Prince-Bythewood and Field.

The shot that nearly broke them, the pointlessness of auditions, the gift of final cut — the directors of some of this year's most powerful movies got together and got real about their craft. In December, JD Dillard (*Devotion*), Todd Field (*Tár*), Alejandro González Iñárritu (*Bardo, False Chronicle of a Handful of Truths*), Joseph Kosinski (*Top Gun: Maverick*), Sarah Polley (*Women Talking*) and Gina Prince-Bythewood (*The Woman King*) convened for *THR*'s annual Director Roundtable.

What's the first thing you think about when you're deciding whether to take on a new movie?

GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD With all of us, there's probably a hundred movies we would like to do, but it's "have to": When I read it, it is an undeniable connection that I have to go on this journey. I have to put these stories into the world.

TODD FIELD The most dangerous thing for any of us is to get involved in a process and lose interest. So it'd better be something that has a fair chance of keeping us involved.

JD DILLARD A couple years ago, I realized that there is a set number of films you'll make. That made me really protective of how that time is spent.

SARAH POLLEY There has to be this sense of urgency about it or something that you think hasn't been said that you want to say. In my case, I have three little kids, and so I just wasn't willing to go into those kinds of hours. So, for me, the turning point was having female producers, Dede Gardner and Frances McDormand, who said, "OK, well, we'll structure this according to people being able to get home for bedtime and not sacrifice our domestic lives and our caregiving responsibilities for making films."

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD My kids were a consideration, too. I have two boys, and when you do a film, you're away. And I had actually said I was going to take a break after *The Old Guard*, like literally promised I was going to take a break. When *The Woman King* script came, I would've probably let it go if it felt like it was going to affect the family. But the beauty was my husband reading it and then saying, "This is your next movie."

ALEJANDRO GONZÁLEZ IÑÁRRITU This film was particularly personal. There were a lot of things that were bothering me that I needed to explore. It's an urgency thing, a need. To make a film is such a difficult and risky thing that you have to have a need.

JOSEPH KOSINSKI It's also just looking for a new challenge. Something I have never done before. A world I want to learn about. My need is, I have to be busy all the time.

> **"If you're doing it right, you should be exhausted by day one because you're so prepared."** JOSEPH KOSINSKI

Who here saw directing as a job that they wanted to do when they were a kid?

POLLEY I was an actor, and I remember when I was about 19 deciding not to go a certain way in my career; not going, for instance, [this is] the way of success, realizing, "OK, this isn't what I want to do." I had an idea for a short film. And through the process of making that short, which was terrible, the most stressful thing I'd ever done, I loved it so much, just the intensity of collaboration and the sense that I'd always been sent away to my trailer for the most interesting parts of filmmaking.

FIELD It started for me in high school. I had a job at a second-run movie house, so we would run certain films for up to six months. I projected *Raiders of Lost Ark* literally, like, 350 times. So I fell in love with movies then. I acted for about five years and quit to go to the American Film Institute and had no desire to act again. But this film that I had acted in by Victor Nuñez [*Ruby in Paradise*] had come out while I was in school and won the grand jury prize at Sundance. And for essentially the next 10 years, my phone would ring with acting offers, and that's how I paid off my student loans. That and my wife [costume designer Serena Rathbun] keeping the lights on.

KOSINSKI I wanted to be either a jazz saxophonist or an astronaut as a kid. So I always had this kind of dual nature. Engineering was what I thought would be my path. But it was an engineering professor who said to me, "You have a great eye. You should look at doing something more creative, maybe architecture." I went to an architecture school where they were giving us the tools of filmmaking and found I had a lot more joy making films in architecture school than making architecture. And luckily someone saw one short film that I did, and I got my first commercial off that, but never would've imagined, growing up in Iowa, that you could actually be a director.

IÑÁRRITU We share the same background being frustrated musicians. I wanted to be a musician, but I realized that my fingers were very clumsy. My guitar playing was not very good. I loved the conceptual albums of the '70s when there were no singles. There was Pink Floyd or Genesis, all these stories told in a musical way. As a [radio] host, I was three hours a day telling stories and playing music. I was entertaining people. I said, "Well, what about if I jumped into the visual thing?" It took me 16 years from the time that I started thinking about it. I directed my first film when I was 35 years [old], you know, so I started very late.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD I was 20. I thought I was going to be a writer, which is why I went to UCLA. I was working on a student film, carrying a bunch of equipment, and it was the first time I fully understood, "Oh, that person that's telling everybody what to do? That's the person telling the story." And realizing that's what the director is. I knew at that moment, "I'm a director."

Todd, what was the process of getting *Tár* financed?

FIELD Very strange. I'm used to having everybody pat you on the head and say, "Good job on the script, but we're not interested." Normally if you write original material, unless you have some wonderful benefactor, it has to

be a spec script. At the beginning of the pandemic, [Focus Features chairman] Peter Kujawski and [president of production and acquisitions] Kiska Higgs said, "Just write whatever you want." That was a very novel situation for me. It felt strange and terrifying to try to live up to that responsibility and the respect that they had given me by offering me that opportunity. I said to Serena, "They're never going to make this. They would be crazy to make it." They were completely on board and supportive and didn't give me one note and said, "Go make it."

Joseph, is it true that it was you who had to convince Tom Cruise to make *Top Gun: Maverick*?

KOSINSKI That was my first assignment, to go to Paris and pitch Tom on the idea. This character of Maverick was one that he didn't want to go back to because he doesn't have to. It's the movie that made him a superstar. So I went to Paris with Jerry Bruckheimer and got 20 minutes with Tom in between setups on *Mission: Impossible*, which is very typical with Tom. He's always working. I started with the story of this reconciliation with his best friend's son and put that against this mission that would take them both deep into enemy territory where they'd have to work together to get back home alive. I could see the wheels in his head start to turn. Then I talked about how we were going to shoot it ... but I think it was that emotional story that hooked him. He pulled his phone out and greenlit the movie.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD They had been trying to get this film set up for six years to get to the point of me being in a room with Viola Davis. It's a film that hadn't been done before and was funded by Black women, and that was something there was no template for. Nobody could look and say, "This is going to make money." *Black Panther* and the success of that absolutely got us at least set up. But when I came in, it didn't have the green light yet. Meeting with Viola, I had to make her trust me that I could take her through this thing that she had never done before. She was going to be a general of an army and all that entails. I did something I've never done ever in my life, which was I cried in the meeting. It was horrifying. I really did think I blew it. But it was that connection that made her trust me as a director. I'm never going to cry again in the meeting, but it was a great lesson.

DILLARD Glen [Powell] had found the book *Devotion* years ago and put it into development, to play [naval aviator] Tom Hudner, and there was no Jesse Brown and no director. My dad was a naval aviator, and I grew up on Navy bases. So that world has always been part of my ecosystem. I came in and just told him my life story, and then I'm getting emotional about my dad. But that became the thing, to say that I can speak to this with some authority.

POLLEY There were decisions we had to make in terms of the kind of movie we wanted to make and the kind of freedom we wanted to have. We had sort of set it up with somebody and then realized, it's very easy to think of *Women Talking* as a bunch of women just sitting around on a very small set in a very claustrophobic film. It was hard to describe why it needed to be on a more epic canvas until the script was written. So I ended up writing it on spec. Dede Gardner always knew that she wanted it at MGM, and we had a very streamlined process, which was new to me. Coming from independent film, it was very exciting to not spend 95 percent of your energy on raising money. So much of the job of being a director is basically being a salesperson, which is not my happy place at all. To not have to put so much energy into that and to be able to focus on the film was so revolutionary for me.

Alejandro, you self-financed *Bardo* in the beginning. Why?

IÑÁRRITU I didn't know if it would work or not. There was no story or pitch. It's a film in Spanish, very personal. There was no star. So I started financing it. In a way I was in this dilemma. I would never be unable to finance it fully. With my wife, we were having a conversation about, "Are we moving forward? How important is this?" And I was very lucky to have this conversation with Scott Stuber of Netflix at a dinner. I was sitting with him and he said, "What you are doing?" Maybe thanks to a couple of mezcals, I was inspired. I told him what it was about and what I was trying to get to, and he said, "I would like to make your movie." Wow. And I said, "Are you sure?" He said yes, and that was it. And he gave me all the freedom he promised.

FIELD I read somewhere that when you were doing *Birdman*, you met with Mike Nichols and he said, "Don't do a oner [a long, continuous shot]."

IÑÁRRITU Two weeks before we start shooting, I want to have the advice of Mike Nichols, king of comedy. It was my first comedy. I went to have a lunch with Mike Nichols in between rehearsals. I start to say, "Mike, I'm doing this film in one shot with these actors, in the theater." When I finished he said, "Alejandro, you should stop now. You are running to disaster." My legs were shaking. "What do you mean?" He starts saying, "A comedy is made on cutting. You cut from one place to the other. These actors are not comedy actors. They know nothing about theater." He starts giving me all the points of a genre that he knows very well. And he was absolutely right. I was terrified. We give a hug, I said, "Thank you very much for your advice." I arrived to the rehearsal and Edward Norton, he was so excited, "How was it with Mike Nichols?!" "It was great." I appreciated what he said because he put me in a red alert. I needed to put in much more effort. I appreciate that he was so honest with me and it was great, but it was terrifying.

What is your approach to creative feedback? How do you take a note you might disagree with?

POLLEY My process has changed a lot. I now try every note. Even if it makes no sense, you might glean something from the process and then you throw the note out, but you've learned something else that matters to you. But you have to be working with people you trust for that paradigm to work. If you're working with an adversarial financier or someone who doesn't understand your vision, that's a bad idea. But in this case, I was getting notes from my producers who deeply cared about and understood the material and were willing to fight for me on the other end of it.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD I will try most notes as long as it doesn't fundamentally go against my vision. I give a speech to every studio exec that I work with, which is, "At the end of the day I have to be able to look up on that screen and believe everything up there. We have a short amount of films we get to make. You guys have a hundred films. This is my legacy. I have to have that ownership." Does anybody here have final cut?

FIELD Yes.

POLLEY I shared it with my producers.

IÑÁRRITU Yes.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD I can't wait. When I showed my cut to Tom Rothman, the head of Sony, he said to me that "We have final cut, but I'm going to give that to you and the film that you want is going to be up on that screen." That was a huge deal. It's funny because we had a meeting where he was giving me his thoughts and I just naturally get tight. And then he said that at the end and I said, "You should have started with that." But that meant a lot. And that was the same on *Old Guard* as well with David Ellison, where he had final cut and he essentially gave it to me. But I want the day where I truly have it.

Todd, did you have Cate Blanchett in mind as you were writing *Tár*?

FIELD I've never written with an actor in mind before, ever. I think it's reductive because you're probably thinking of something they've already done, which doesn't benefit them or you. But then Cate just appeared [in my mind] and wouldn't go away. When I finished writing it, the studio said enthusiastically they wanted to make it. And of course, the first question was, "Do you have anyone in mind?" I said, "Absolutely not." They said, "We could send you lists." I was like, "No, no, no. I need some time." I was so nervous because ... she had just been showing up [in my head] every day while I'd been working. It took a month of stalling until Serena kind of kicked me and said, "Quit being a coward, call her." Very quickly, Cate said she would do it. Then there was a second lockdown in Berlin and we had to scrub it. It was important to me to shoot it in a particular light, a three-week window in November, which meant we would have to shoot all of our interiors first before we faced any windows and before we went outside. So once I missed that window, we were going to have to punt for another year. And that was very lucky because she had a year to prepare and she needed it, we needed it.

Polley describes what enabled the making of *Women Talking*: "The turning point was having female producers who said, 'We'll structure this and not sacrifice our domestic lives and our caregiving responsibilities for making films.' "

THR Oscar Roundtables, presented by Virgin Atlantic, feature the most compelling artists and filmmakers whose work has been recognized as awards-season contenders by the editors of *The Hollywood Reporter*. Look for an extended video version of this Director Roundtable on *THR.com/Roundtables*.

Sarah, you had something similar, — you were aiming for summer and when COVID messed that up, you had a whole other year before things came together. Did your casting stay the same in that time?

POLLEY Well, it gave us a lot of time to cast, and it was a strange casting process, because to cast one character, you had to cast everybody. They had to represent different points of view, there couldn't be a duplication of energy, and there had to be chemistry. So trying to cast that entire ensemble, it was like casting an organism. It allowed us to meet with so many people and try out in our heads so many different iterations of who would populate that hayloft. You were casting a community onscreen, but also it had to be 12 actors who could work together in a hayloft for months, make room for each other and sit off camera for three or four days at a time.

How much of casting is thinking about not only their ability as an actor but what they're going to be like on the set?

FIELD That's a big one. It's like when you cast children, you really cast their parents. Actors are very much like racehorses. They can get spooked very easily. And are you the right jockey?

POLLEY Do you think you learned more from auditions or from meetings with actors?

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD Meetings. I love meetings.

FIELD Meetings, yeah. Milos Forman used to do that. He would never read you. I met him years ago and he had cast me in a film, which they [didn't] make with me because they wanted John Cusack. But I went to have this meeting. I had to wait a long time, like an hour, the door opens and Adam Sandler comes walking out. We were both kids. I leave Sony and I'm getting in my car and I hear this, "Hey, Field, Field." It's Adam and he goes, "What was that? He just wanted to talk. He wouldn't let me do anything. I've

got to do something, man." But that's how he cast.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD For me, the personal is equal to craft. We're about to go on this incredible journey. I need to trust you. I need to like you. Lashana Lynch and John Boyega, the reason I knew as soon as I read the script I wanted them was because I saw these two speeches that they gave and it revealed who they were as people. And I just wanted that energy for those characters. So in meeting with somebody, I want to know what you're going to bring. I want to know how passionate you are. I want to know your work ethic. On *The Woman King*, I knew I wanted them to do their own fighting and stunts. It wasn't just like, "Oh, you're going to get in shape for a month." I'm talking months, so I need to look you in the eye and say to you, "Are you going to do absolutely everything?"

DILLARD There's also sometimes that magic trick where you're a fan of someone's work and then you meet them and you realize how different they are than everything that they play. It adds this new layer, like, "You are really working." What you do on set is actually a phenomenal trick because you're not showing up as yourself. I felt that way severely with Jonathan Majors. How he carries himself reveals how much of a chameleon he actually is. I always find that so special to see.

IÑÁRRITU I have always been very impressed with actors. I remember Sean Penn in *21 Grams*, he was doing this dying guy and was so intense, and then you cut and he was just laughing and smoking. And then, "OK, roll camera." That is very magical, but that's a construct. But there are some other cases where you need to go for the natural thing. That's a difficult question when you have somebody that has craft, but there's another person that is not as technical but is the perfect one. It's like the technique or the soul, and how long the soul will take you to the technique.

FIELD I find a lot of really incredible actors are terrible auditioners. Famously, De Niro, Pacino, they couldn't audition. And then there are people that come in and they're just magnificent in the audition. And that's all you're ever going to get. So when I cast, I always say I need an hour for each person. And they always say, "You're crazy, you can't have an hour." And it's like, "Well then show me fewer people, but give me an hour." Because you have to get the pachyderm out of the room, which is OK, you're in a powerful position, you're the filmmaker, they want the part, you have to get past that. And that's through repetition. It takes 40 minutes at least until you can read with someone and actually have a fighting chance to see what they can do.

What's the shot in your movie that almost killed you, your hardest day?

IÑÁRRITU The dancing scene. We shot in this place that was run-down, a nightclub in the middle of the pandemic. We were 800 extras. There was no AC. It was hot as hell. Everybody was sniffing and farting and smelling and smoking. And everybody wore masks and we had to test all these guys, 800 extras, and dress them and all the protocols. It was a long shot to choreograph and the music was prerecorded. It was a very technical, controlled kind of thing. And always there was an extra smiling to the camera.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD The most difficult day was one of the character's deaths. Every day on our schedule felt like an impossible day, but that one, I had to shoot the entire action sequence of their escape, and then shoot the death. I didn't know how I was going to make the day. I couldn't let the actors know I felt that way. I remember showing up on set and going to talk to one of the actors who was going to die. She was already there emotionally. So then I had to think, "How can I protect her throughout this day, get through all of this and keep her percolating at that spot? How am I not going to rush this incredibly important moment?" And so we get through all of [the action] and I've got like an hour to shoot the deaths and, you know, there's blood and spit and [the actors] came to me like, "Can we do this in as few takes as possible?" Because of what they're going to be giving. And I want that. So it was really a speech to the crew just reminding them what these two characters are going through, what this scene means, what these actors are pulling from to get this. And everyone just came together so beautifully. And I did it in three takes. It was the third take that I went with. It was the best day we had shooting. It was three weeks in and the next day we got shut down because of omicron.

What's the worst advice to give to a new director?

POLLEY Do whatever you have to do to get your shot.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD Do whatever you have to do to get your first film. Because then you may end up doing something that you don't care about or you're not passionate about. And that will be the death knell of your career.

What do you wish you'd known when you were making your first film?

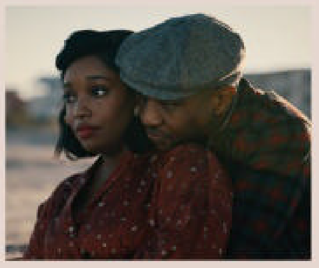
IÑÁRRITU Discipline. One of the dangers is to get somebody to just trust in his instinct and inspiration and never be challenged by anybody. That could mislead somebody to believe that this is something that is only about inspiration and not the work.

FIELD From the outside, people understandably think that you sit in a chair and people bring you things. They don't realize that you're just wrecked because you're worrying about everything.

KOSINSKI If you're doing it right, you should be exhausted by day one because you're so prepared. Over-prepare. You need to have a plan A, a plan B, and you'll probably end up doing plan D.

Interview has been edited for length and clarity.

JD DILLARD

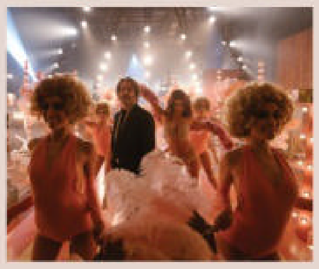


Devotion

TODD FIELD

Tár

ALEJANDRO GONZÁLEZ IÑÁRRITU



Bardo, False Chronicle of a Handful of Truths

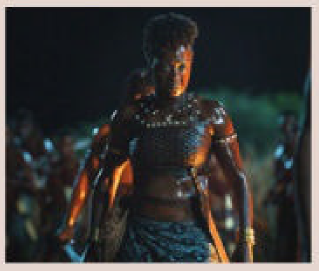
JOSEPH KOSINSKI

Top Gun: Maverick

SARAH POLLEY

Women Talking

GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD



The Woman King

DEVOTION: COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES. *TAR*: COURTESY OF FOCUS FEATURES. *BARDO*: SEOJU PARK/NETFLIX. *TOP*: COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES. *WOMEN*: MICHAEL GIBSON/ORION RELEASING LLC. *WOMAN*: ILZE KITSHOFF/SONY PICTURES.

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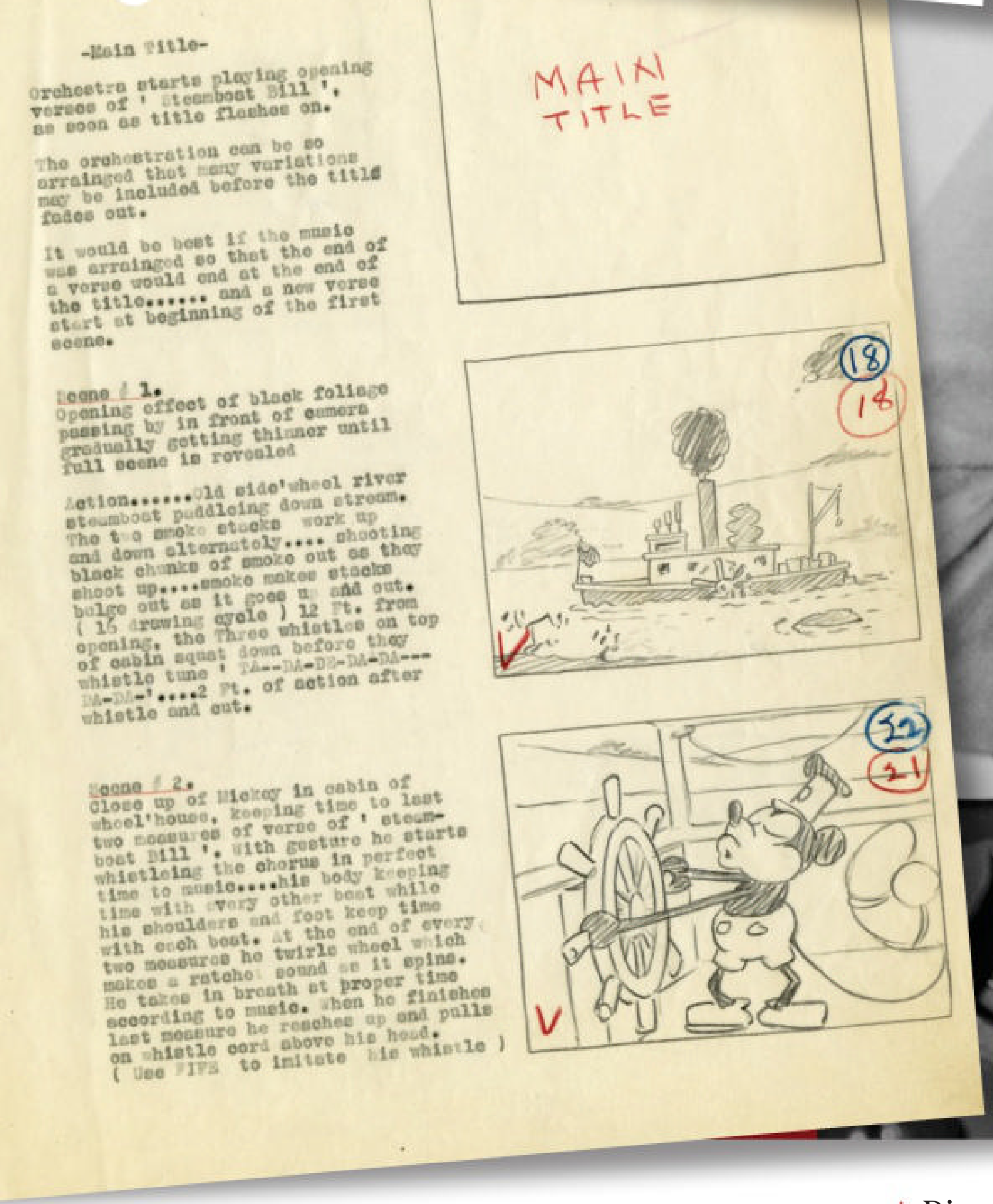

1

-Main Title-
Orchestra starts playing opening
verses of ' Steamboat Bill ',
as soon as title flashes on.

The orchestration can be so
arrainged that many variations
may be included before the title
fades out.

It would be best if the music
was arrainged so that the end of
a verse would end at the end of
the title....... and a new verse
start at beginning of the first
scene.

MAIN
TITLE

Scene # 1.
Opening effect of black foliage
passing by in front of camera
gradually getting thinner until
full scene is revealed

Action.......Old side'wheel river
steamboat puddleing down stream.
The two smoke stacks work up
and down alternately.... shooting
black chunks of smoke out as they
shoot up....smoke makes stacks
bulge out as it goes up and out.
(15 drawing cycle) 12 Ft. from
opening. the Three whistles on top
of cabin squat down before they
whistle tune ' DA--DA-DE-DA-DA---
DA-DA-'....2 Ft. of action after
whistle and out.

18
18

Scene # 2.
Close up of Mickey in cabin of
wheel'house, keeping time to last
two measures of verse of ' steam-
boat Bill '. With gesture he starts
whistleing the chorus in perfect
time to music....his body keeping
time with every other beat while
his shoulders and foot keep time
with each beat. At the end of every
two measures he twirls wheel which
makes a ratchet sound as it spins.
He takes in breath at proper time
according to music. When he finishes
last measure he reaches up and pulls
on whistle cord above his head.
(Use FIFE to imitate his whistle)

32
21

WALT DISNEY CO. ARCHIVES director Becky Cline has spent the past several months shuttling between the studio's Burbank lot and Philadelphia, where a sprawling exhibit is debuting in February as part of the conglomerate's yearlong 100th anniversary celebration in 2023. After Philly's famed Franklin Institute, *Disney100: The Exhibition* will embark on a global five-year tour. The 15,000-square-foot spectacle will showcase more than 250 items, including Mickey Mouse sketches through the years, the storybook seen in 1937's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and the snow globe from 1964's *Mary Poppins*, not to mention Marvel, *Star Wars*, *Avatar* and Pixar paraphernalia.

None is more important than the contract signed by Walt Disney and his brother Roy O. Disney on Oct. 16, 1923, to make a series of six *Alice in Wonderland*-themed cartoons for distributor M.J. Winkler, who booked animated shorts to play before silent movies. The pact marked the founding of the Disney Brothers Studio, which would go through several name and company changes, beginning with Walt Disney Studio in 1926, before resting at its current Walt Disney Co. conglomeration in 1986. "It's just a contract from the 1920s, but historically and culturally, it is probably the company's most precious asset," says Cline. "That's why we are celebrating its signing as the 100th anniversary."

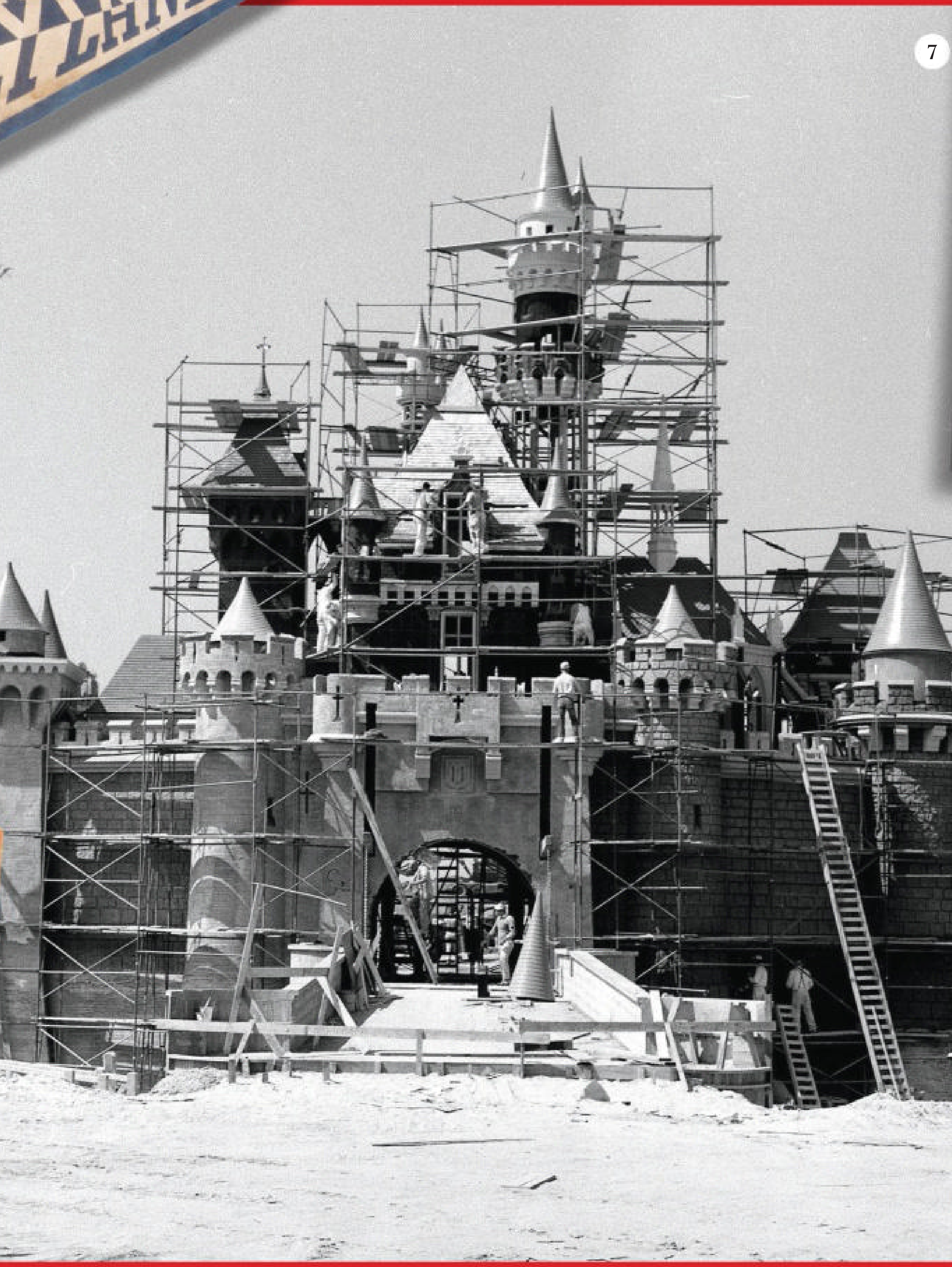
Walt and Roy Disney's studio struck gold when Mickey Mouse in the 1928 cartoon *Steamboat Willie* became an overnight sensation. Mickey, who was first sketched by Walt and then refined by animator Ub Iwerks, spawned merchandise, Mickey Mouse clubs and a comic strip, allowing an ambitious and restless Walt Disney to focus on storytelling and creating lasting kid-friendly characters that would become part of the public consciousness. He revolutionized the theme park business by creating Disneyland, another passion project born from making model trains in his backyard when the by-then entertainment visionary was ordered by his doctor in the early 1950s to find a hobby.

A century later, The Walt Disney Co. is Hollywood's leading entertainment corporation and among the world's best known companies with a portfolio that includes a marquee film stable, television, stage plays, theme parks, cruise ships and a streaming service, among other ventures. It has endured its fair share of ups and downs through the

COURTESY OF DISNEY (10)

DISNEYLAND

7



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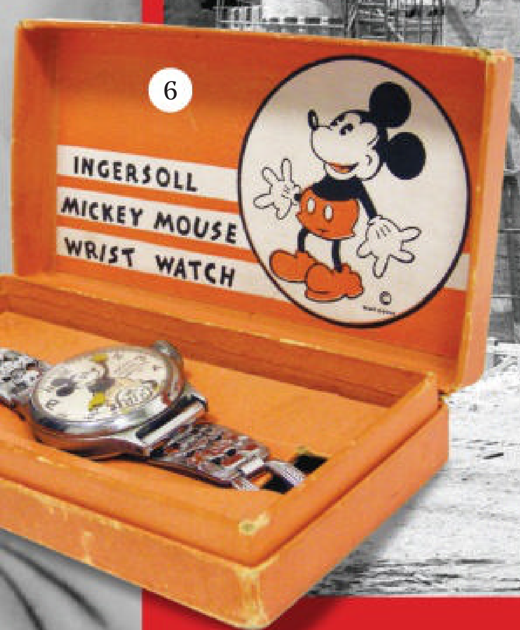
Flash! HERE NOW
WORLD PREMIERE
of Walt Disney's
NEW TYPE SHORT FEATURE FILM
SEAL ISLAND
FIRST OF HIS "TRUE-LIFE ADVENTURE" SERIES
A LIVE-ACTION Saga OF NATURE IN
THE MYSTIC PRIBILOF ISLANDS
Print by TECHNICOLOR

6


INGERSOLL
MICKEY MOUSE
WRIST WATCH

1 A page from the script for the cartoon short *Steamboat Willie*.
2 Walt Disney and Mickey Mouse pose in front of the Sleeping Beauty Castle at Disneyland in 1966.
3 Roy O. Disney, Walt's brother and business partner, purchased the first Disneyland ticket on July 18, 1955.
4 Walt at his desk in 1933 at the studio's headquarters on Hyperion Avenue in L.A.
5 A Mickey Mouse pennant.
6 One of many Mickey Mouse watches made through the decades.
7 The castle under construction two months before Disneyland's opening.
8 A poster for *Seal Island*, the first of many nature documentaries made by Walt Disney.
9 The October 1923 contract establishing the Disney Brothers Studio, the first iteration of what would become The Walt Disney Co.
10 The stage adaptation of the movie *Beauty and the Beast* was among several Broadway hits for Disney.

100 YEARS OF DISNEY

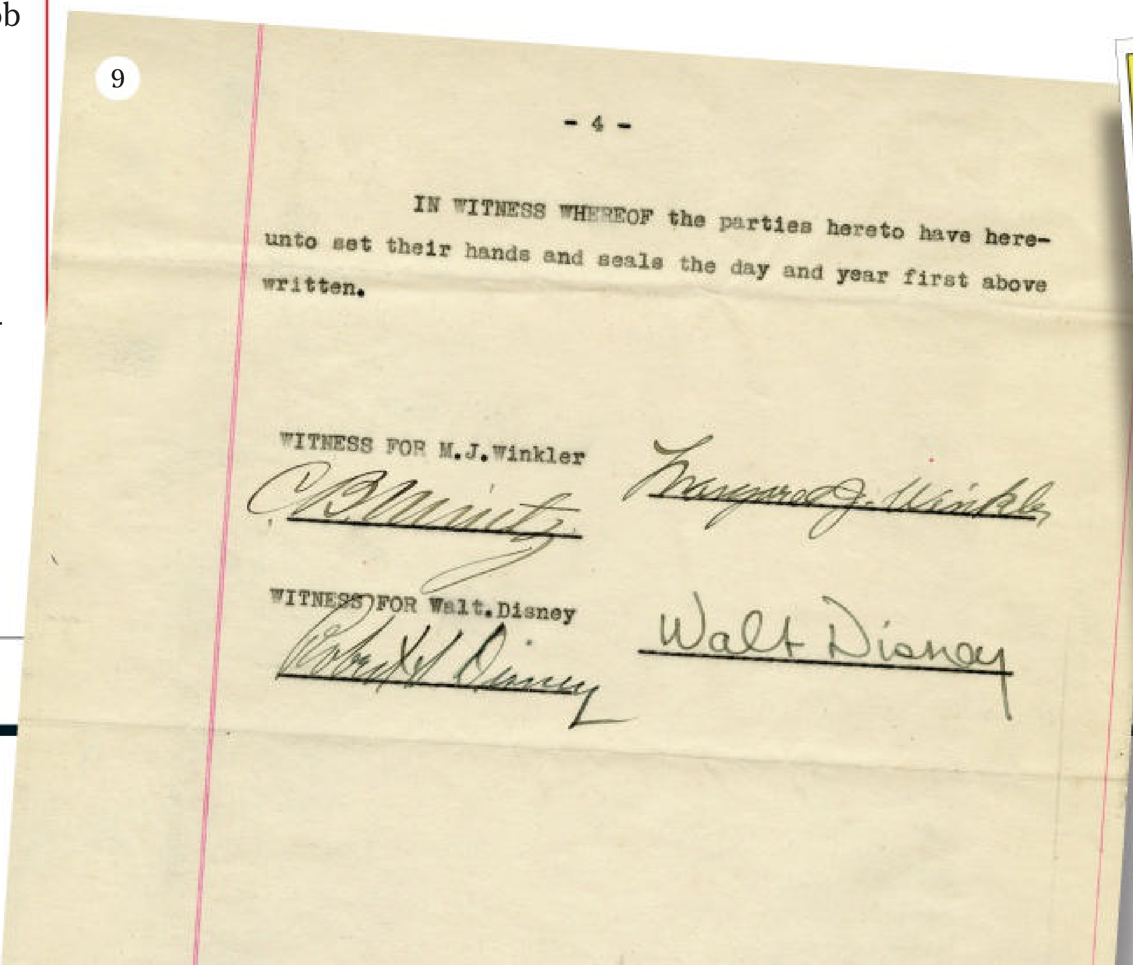
A century after brothers Walt and Roy O. Disney signed their first contract to make cartoon shorts, The Walt Disney Co. conglomerate kicks off a global tour celebrating its cultural feats from *Snow White* to Marvel, Disneyland and *Star Wars*: 'There's a psychological response to Disney that others don't have'

BY PAMELA MCCLINTOCK

decades, including a long, bleak period after Walt Disney's death in December 1966 (the era known as the Disney Renaissance began when Michael Eisner was named CEO in 1984). There also has been plenty of C-suite drama, including the recent unexpected return of Bob Iger as chairman and CEO after the Disney board ousted Bob Chapek in November. The company suffered its worst stock decline in years in 2022 as it grappled with changing CEOs, the high cost of streaming and most recently, a lower than expected *Avatar: The Way of Water* global opening weekend in mid-December (the sequel made up ground over the Christmas and New Year holiday).

Animation historian Don Hahn, who produced such Disney hits as *Beauty and the Beast*, believes Walt Disney would be pleased that Iger is back at the helm in time for the 100th anniversary. "Bob Iger is an unusual mix of creativity toward the artistic side and responsibility toward the board. He has been a great steward of the company. It's hard to replace that," he says. After succeeding Eisner in 2005, Iger engineered the acquisitions of Pixar, Marvel Entertainment, Lucasfilm and 20th Century Fox. The movie studio's standing began to soar: In 2019, Disney made history after a record $13.2 billion in global

9



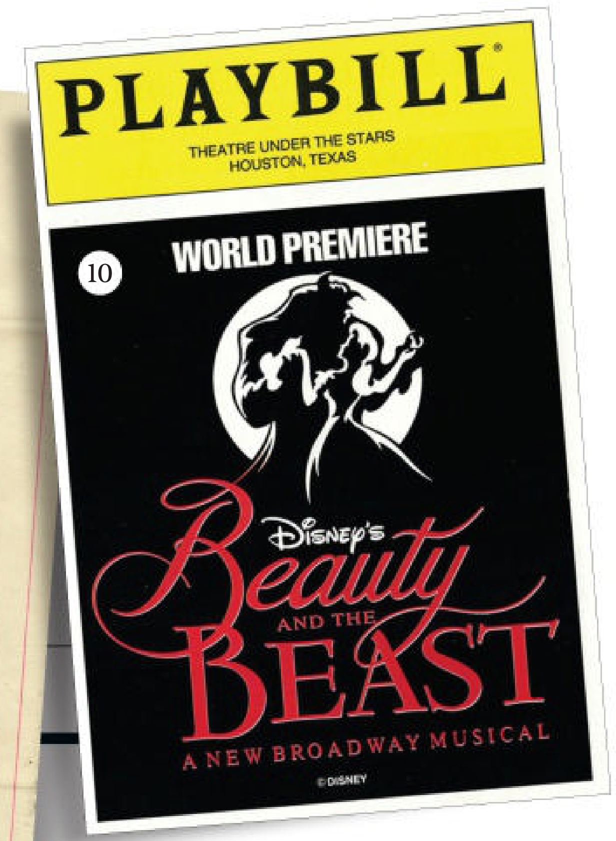
- 4 -

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the parties hereto have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

WITNESS FOR M.J.Winkler
C. Blaintz
Margaret J. Winkler

WITNESS FOR Walt.Disney
Robert S. Disney
Walt Disney

10


PLAYBILL
THEATRE UNDER THE STARS
HOUSTON, TEXAS
WORLD PREMIERE
Disney's
Beauty AND THE BEAST
A NEW BROADWAY MUSICAL
© DISNEY

Snow White's Road Map of Disney Success

Walt's first animated feature with sound made history after premiering in December 1937

The premiere for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was as star-studded as any red carpet for a live-action film. Walt Disney knew the event, staged on Dec. 21, 1937, at the Carthay Circle Theatre in Los Angeles, had to be big. Lore has it that Clark Gable and Carole Lombard wept during the movie, which marked Disney's first animated feature with sound, as well as Disney's first feature-length movie. Charlie Chaplin and Judy Garland also were among the notable names who attended.

"It was a turning point. Before that, animation was just a novelty and a parlor trick," says Disney historian Don Hahn. "There had been concern among some studios and audience members that you couldn't sit and watch a cartoon that long."

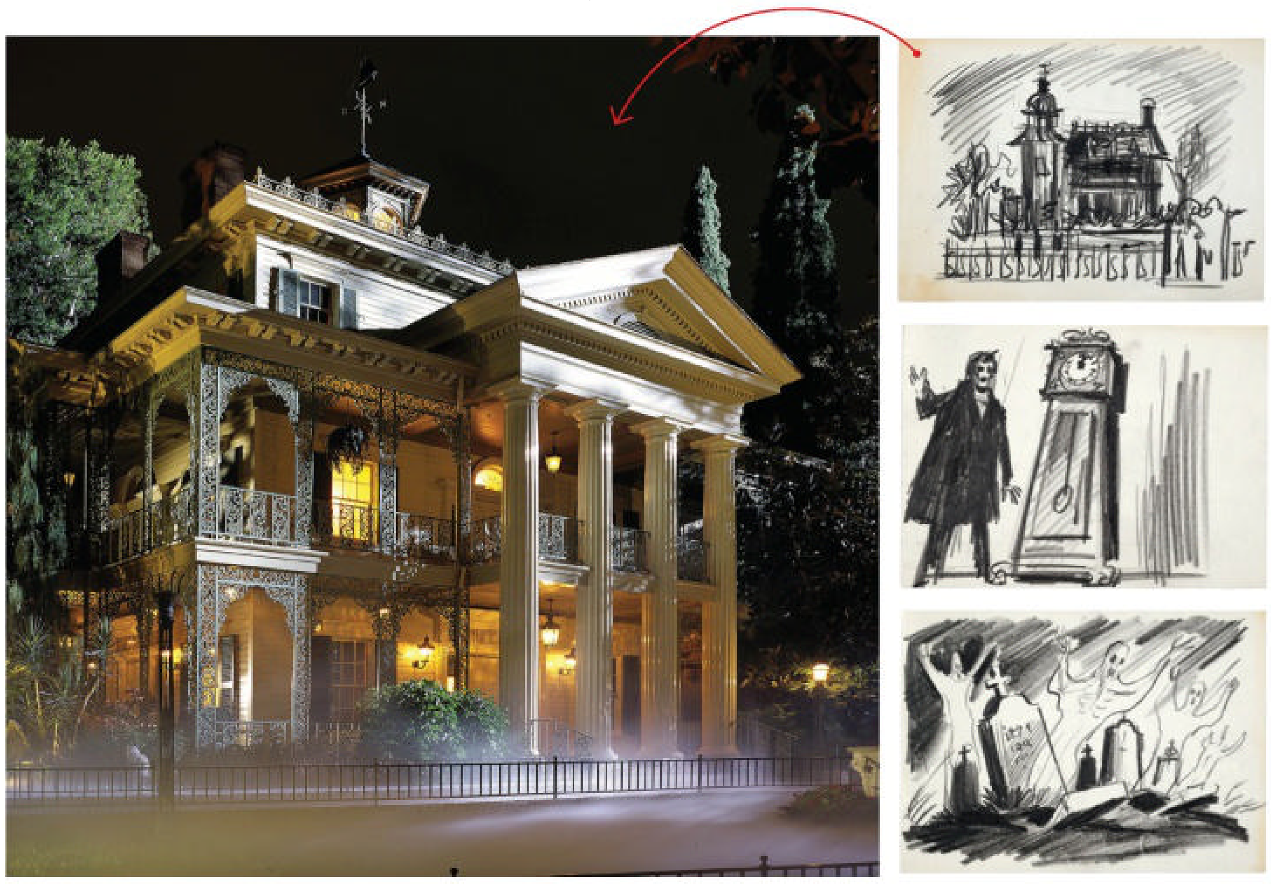
The worry was for naught. The musical fantasy — which earned an Oscar

Walt Disney's
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
After Bath Powder
LANDER

Merchandise for 1937's groundbreaking *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* minted millions, including bath powder (pictured above) as well as a balloon pump.

Another Movie From Haunted Mansion Attraction

Walt Disney directed his Imagineers to begin designing the popular attraction in the early 1950s, but it didn't open until 1969, three years after the studio founder died



There is nothing more precious to a Hollywood studio than IP — of which Disney has plenty.

Just as characters from Disney movies are featured at the company's theme parks, so do the attractions cross-pollinate and become movies. Many were dubious when the studio announced plans to make a movie based on the Pirates of the Caribbean ride. The Johnny Depp-led franchise transformed into a giant box office success following the first movie's release in summer 2003.

Later that year, *The Haunted Mansion*, starring Eddie Murphy, also hit theaters. The film earned a so-so $182 million at the global box office against a $90 million budget (the film has since become something of a home entertainment Halloween classic). Disney will have another go this summer, when Justin Simien's star-packed *Haunted Mansion* opens. Rosario Dawson plays a mother who discovers her new home is haunted and stars opposite Jamie Lee Curtis, Jared Leto and Owen Wilson.

Simien worked closely with Walt Disney Imagineering, which is responsible for creating, designing and building all theme park attractions. The creative division, founded by Walt Disney in 1952 to assist with Disneyland, also is responsible for keeping an eye on cruise ships, merchandise product development, games and publishing.

Above, from left: Disneyland's Haunted Mansion, still one of the most popular attractions at the park decades later; early story sketches of the attraction drawn by Ken Anderson in 1967.

"Our whole focus is putting [park] guests in the middle of a story," says Mark LaVine, a writer and executive of story development at Imagineering.

The Imagineers also assisted filmmakers on the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series and the 2021 *Jungle Cruise* movie. Directed by Jaume Collet-Serra, *Jungle Cruise* stars Dwayne Johnson as a riverboat captain who takes a scientist, played by Emily Blunt, in search of the Tree of Life. LaVine says it's important for films to have Easter eggs and props people will recognize from the ride.

"Some of the jokes that Dwayne Johnson tells are jokes that you'll hear our skippers say in the parks," says LaVine. "There are a lot of park original stories that have this kind of potential, which is exciting."

WALT
DISNEY
STUDIOS

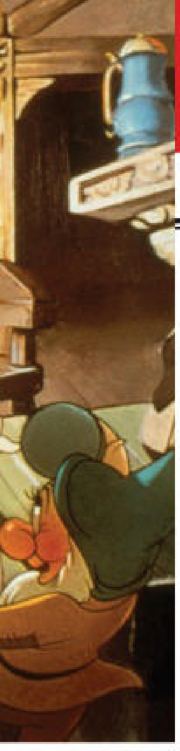
From left: Roy Disney, Michael Eisner and Jay Rasulo attended the opening of Walt Disney Studios in Marne-La-Vallee, France.

ticket sales. "We are incredibly grateful to the generations of people all over the world who have invited our stories and characters into their lives over the past 100 years," Iger said in a statement to *THR*. "Creativity has always been the essence of who we are as a company, and Walt Disney's boundless imagination and his relentless pursuit of excellence continue to propel the company forward today. We are honored to reach this historic milestone."

Such milestones include *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Hollywood's first animated feature with sound. The film became a cultural sensation and profit monster after premiering in 1937. Walt was vastly ahead of his time, not only in selling Snow White merchandise a year before the movie even hit theaters, but in using the characters for comic strips and other ventures. He even considered a stage play but dropped the idea out of concern that theater owners would consider it direct competition. Still, he created a road map for exploiting his movies, as well as how to market a title.

He used the profits to build a studio on Burbank's Buena Vista Avenue — where the company remains today — and to hire more animators to work on *Pinocchio*, *Fantasia*, *Dumbo* and *Bambi*, all released between 1940 and 1942. "*Snow White* did something not only for the company but also for the motion picture industry. It's part of that idea that they had to diversify," says Hahn. "Walt Disney and his brother saw that doing six- or

MANSION, POWDER, *ENCANTO*: COURTESY OF DISNEY (7). *SNOW*: WALT DISNEY PICTURES/ EVERETT COLLECTION. R. DISNEY: ALEXIS DUCLOS/GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGES. IGER: MARK PETERSON/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES.



nomination for its score — would go on to garner more than $6.7 million in North America, a huge sum that made it the highest-grossing sound film at that time, a record it handed over to *Gone With the Wind* two years later. (It earned another $7 million-plus overseas.) Including rereleases, *Snow White* is one of the top 10 highest-performing films of all time when adjusted for inflation, according to Box Office Mojo.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, based on the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, was the first in a long line of Disney animated titles that keep on giving across various divisions of the company (another example is *The Lion King*'s release in 1994, which led to a Broadway version in 1997 and a live-action update in 2019). In March 2024, the studio will release a live-action iteration of the 1937 *Snow White* film that's to be directed by Marc Webb, starring Rachel Zegler in the titular role and Gal Gadot as the Evil Queen.

"Walt found stories that were timeless. Then he applied the best technology and the best talent, as well as working to make them relevant and thrilling and entertaining for the time," says Sean Bailey, president of Walt Disney Studios Motion Picture Production, home of the many live-action reimaginings of classic films and theme park attractions; in May, Bailey's live-action division will release *The Little Mermaid*.

Bailey says he and his team discuss the idea of making films relevant for modern-day audiences on a daily basis. Both Snow White and Cinderella are more empowered in the live-action versions, as was Jasmine in *Aladdin*, says Bailey. Angelina Jolie as Maleficent is another strong female character.

Bailey recalls how Walt Disney seemed to bristle during a radio interview when asked why he would make the 1954 live-action movie *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* when his specialty was producing animated movies for kids.

"He got seemingly semi-offended and said, 'I don't make films primarily for children. I make them for the child in all of us, whether we be 6 or 60,' " says Bailey, who adds that he can relate. "That is our biggest North Star when we're going to make a *Little Mermaid* or a *Jungle Book*. We're making big movies. We want kids to love them, but we don't ever think we're making them for kids."

eight-minute shorts for the rest of their lives would be not too challenging."

The burst of energy took its toll. By the end of 1941, a year after relocating from Hyperion Avenue to the Valley, the company was facing a financial crisis. The golden age was over. "They did so much between 1937 and 1941, when the war broke out, and then it just stopped completely for a variety of reasons. They ran out of money, and, more importantly, the animators went on strike," says Hahn. By all accounts, the strike left Walt Disney embittered and fiercely anti-communist.

He ignored concerns that *Song of the South* had racist overtones. The live-action/animated movie, upon which the ride Splash Mountain was later based, met with protesters and picket lines upon its 1946 release for its distorted, positive view of the lives of enslaved people; it has never been released on home video.

Shortly after its release, Walt diversified again, turning his attention to making the first of many nature documentaries, *Seal Island*. The 1948 film is among the features, docs and shorts earning Walt Disney 26 Oscars, a record for an individual. (That includes honorary Oscars. His first was an honorary statuette awarded in 1932 for the creation of Mickey Mouse.) Walt also decided to partner on British live-action films, including *Treasure Island*, after he was unable to extract *Snow White* earnings from England because of World War II. Later, the studio would pivot into live-action, including *Mary Poppins*.

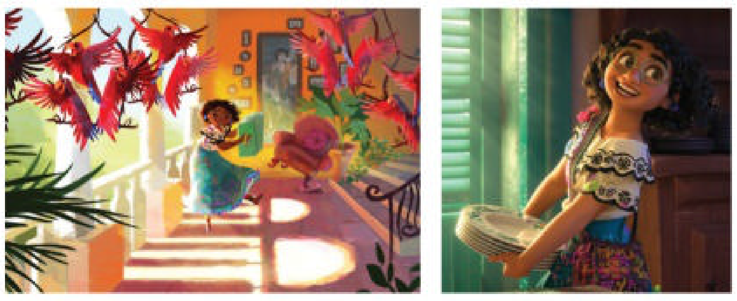
The studio reestablished itself in animation with *Cinderella* and *Peter Pan*, which opened in 1950 and 1953, respectively. The two films provided a treasure trove of new characters to exploit across various divisions — including Disneyland, which was an instant success when it opened in 1955. (Walt Disney funded the theme park with money from the TV networks in exchange for programming.)

Yet Walt couldn't shake the reputation in the post-War era that he had become a corporate suit only interested in making a dollar, particularly after the creation of Disneyland. Whereas once intellectuals had praised him for his creativity and revolutionizing animation — he was even compared to such creative forces as Charlie Chaplin — now they took aim, saying he had become a mass artist, according to biographer Neal Gabler's definitive book, *Walt Disney: The Triumph of the American Imagination*. "That's not at all what he was after. This is a company that has made its entire career out of bringing you into the fold in your childhood," says Hahn. "We have all these memories of cartoons and Disneyland. There's a psychological and emotional response to Disney that others, Warner Bros. or Apple, don't have. You grow up with it, so you're going to have strong opinions about it, much more than any other company."

At the 2003 ABC upfronts, Bob Iger (left), then president of Disney, with his boss, chairman and CEO Eisner.

Encanto: Another Step Forward in Storytelling

The Oscar-nominated feature broke records with its 'Bruno' hit and has drawn praise for its cultural representation



Mirabel's visual development by Lorelay Bové in *Encanto*. Says chief creative officer Jennifer Lee, "Telling stories from around the world is a privilege."

Like many others, Jennifer Lee remembers watching reruns of *The Wonderful World of Disney* as a kid growing up in the 1970s and feeling inspired by "Uncle Walt," as he was known on the show. She dreamed of becoming an animator at the company — which she eventually did. Lee, who joined Walt Disney Animation as a writer in 2011, was named chief creative officer of the storied studio in 2018.

"It felt like home. We have a portrait of Walt by the front entrance, and every time I pass it, I think of his legacy, innovative spirit, dedication to artistry and his commitment to ever-evolving storytelling. It drives everything we do," says Lee, the first female director of a Walt Disney Animation film (*Frozen*).

Walt Disney Animation's Oscar-nominated *Encanto*, which is praised for representing Latinos and Colombian culture, is an example of how the studio is continuing the legacy, as part of a progression that has included *Mulan*, *The Princess and the Frog*, *Coco* and *Raya and the Last Dragon*. "Telling stories from around the world is a privilege. The care, respect and love that went into making *Encanto* inspires us as a studio and propels us forward," says Lee. *Encanto*'s soundtrack, which included eight original songs from Lin-Manuel Miranda, went viral after the film was released in theaters over Thanksgiving 2021 and on Disney+ a month later. In particular, Miranda's "We Don't Talk About Bruno" was a massive hit and became the biggest Disney song of all time, a record once held by songs like *Frozen*'s "Let It Go."

Says Lee, "Walt had a deep respect for music and for those who created it, including the great Sherman Brothers," who wrote such iconic tunes as "It's a Small World (After All)" for Disneyland.

On Nov. 22, Walt Disney Animation will release *Wish*, an original story with new music from Julia Michaels. The movie, which opens amid the company's yearlong 100th anniversary celebration, explores the story of the star that many Disney characters wish upon. Lee and her fellow *Frozen* director Chris Buck wrote the script. Buck is directing *Wish* with Fawn Veerasunthorn, a storyboard artist who likewise worked on *Frozen*.

MAKING OF

Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery

Writer-director Rian Johnson took the second Benoit Blanc film to Greece with a new cast and a fresh murder for Daniel Craig's detective to solve

BY BEATRICE VERHOEVEN

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A good mystery often begins with a clue that's right out in the open, even if no one recognizes it at first. In a similar way, the extravagant Greek villa that serves as the principal setting for *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* impressed production designer Rick Heinrichs when he first visited it early in his location search, but it wasn't immediately selected for the movie's game of murder that turns deadly. "It was a place that had a modernist take on classical architecture and had a hierarchy of stairs that led up to it, and I could see us placing a dome on top of it," Heinrichs tells *THR*. "But our experience always tells us that the first place is never the one you end up with." Instead, he conducted "a worldwide search and looked at everything, and it was only then that we fully appreciated the villa we had found."

With its sweeping view of the Aegean Sea, the Aman Resorts' Villa 20 in Greece's Porto Heli not only looked as if it could double as the lavish island estate of Edward Norton's new-money billionaire Miles Bron, it also guaranteed that *Glass Onion* would have an expansively different look than writer-director Rian Johnson's first *Knives Out* mystery, set in an old-money Massachusetts manse.

When the first *Knives Out*, produced by MRC on a modest $40 million budget and distributed by Lionsgate, proved an unexpected hit, grossing $313 million worldwide following its November 2019 release, a sequel became inevitable. Johnson tells *THR*, "Even when we were making the first movie, I was thinking, 'If this does well, it would be fun to keep making them, but always in the way that Agatha Christie did her books,' " continuously challenging her detectives Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot to unravel the usually fatal relationships among a new cast of suspicious characters. Johnson says *Glass Onion* isn't strictly speaking a sequel but instead is a new Benoit Blanc mystery, Blanc being the Southern-accented sleuth created by Johnson and played with sly wit by Daniel Craig.

"That led to some creative choices," Johnson continues. "The setting was a way of showing the audience very clearly we were going to be in a whole new deal with this one, trading in the browns of New England for the blues and yellows of Greece." For his part, Craig was more than game, telling *THR*, "The success of the first one took us all by surprise, and no one dared to believe we could make another, so it was just a thrilling prospect."

Even as Lionsgate signaled it was ready to greenlight a follow-up, in March 2021 Netflix swooped in, winning an auction with a whopping $469 million offer for two more *Knives Out* movies.

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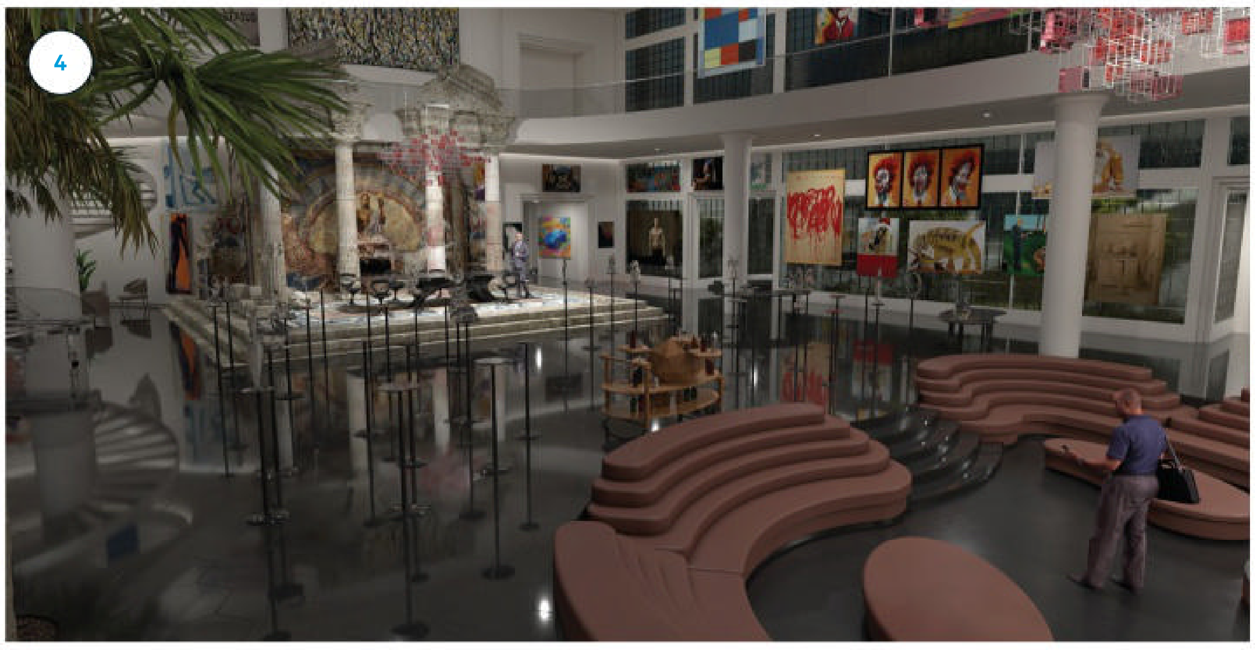
So, Johnson got to work. He says the first 80 or 90 percent of his writing process involves outlining, which proves particularly useful in whodunits, where every loose end needs to be tied up and every clue has to be dropped in plain sight. Working in Moleskine notebooks, he drew arcs so that he could sprinkle in clues along the way.

He decided on "the idea of a murder mystery on vacation," inspired by Poirot outings like *Death on the Nile* and *Evil Under the Sun*. "I thought it'd be nice to have an island because then you can isolate everyone together. And who would have a private

1 *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* star Daniel Craig (left) and writer-director Rian Johnson inside the glass onion structure built in Belgrade, Serbia. **2** From left: Kathryn Hahn, Madelyn Cline, Edward Norton, Leslie Odom Jr. and Kate Hudson are among the star-studded ensemble in the Netflix murder mystery. **3** Janelle Monáe in a suit that costume designer Jenny Eagan says was the most difficult costume to nail down, considering the number of action sequences featuring Monáe's character. **4** The atrium, made up of glass sculptures, elaborate artwork and this "weird '70s-like orgy pit," says Johnson.



JOHNSON, *GLASS*: JOHN WILSON/NETFLIX (3).
INTERIOR: COURTESY OF RICK HEINRICHS/NETFLIX.

island? Oh, maybe it's a tech billionaire." And then, what if that tech billionaire — like James Coburn's movie producer in 1973's *The Last of Sheila* — invites "all of his friends for a murder-mystery game?" Quickly, the game was afoot. Johnson chose *Glass Onion* for a title since it refers both to the translucent dome atop Bron's villa and the name of a bar where the billionaire and his chums once hung out, while also providing a metaphor for the many layers of mystery to be peeled away. And even though the musical rights were expensive, he also acknowledged a debt to The Beatles' tune "Glass Onion," which plays over the closing credits.

To add that "glass onion" atop the Villa 20 without harming the resort's architectural integrity, AR and VFX was employed to augment the exterior shots. But for the interior of the dome, Heinrichs' team built a set on a soundstage in Belgrade, Serbia. Originally, the plan had been to shoot interiors in London, but with so many films rushing into production post-COVID, the London studios already were booked.

"We thought we would shoot in London for something like this because we were going to be really dependent on a lot of resources available to us there," Heinrichs explains. "The glass unit was built in London, and it was engineered and constructed and fully set up onstage not too far from Pinewood. Then they took it apart, put it in a truck and sent all the wood elements that represented glass panes off to a glass company in Germany, where they were separately cut up and sent to Belgrade, where it was all reassembled."

Meanwhile, the cast was gathering to begin filming exteriors in Greece. In addition to Craig and Norton, the star-studded lineup includes Kate Hudson, Janelle Monáe, Kathryn Hahn, Dave Bautista, Leslie Odom Jr., Madelyn Cline and Jessica Henwick. Most of the cast is introduced during the solving of an intricate puzzle box in the opening sequence, which Johnson concocted with props master Kris Peck. But having so many principal characters proved to be challenging on many fronts, from filming to editing.

Costume designer Jenny Eagan, who worked on the first *Knives Out*, says everything was "bigger and broader" the second time around, since the characters converge in Greece in all manner of colorful resort wear and, unlike the first film's family, none of the characters are related to one another.

For Hudson's Birdie, a flamboyant influencer, it was about "her outrageous personality," says Eagan. "We wanted to make it bold and ridiculous. The hats and, of course, there's a little bit of her mom [Goldie Hawn] from *Overboard* in there." Again, with a nod to *Evil Under the Sun*, "These are very high-class, over-the-top people, and that's where I thought with Birdie we could definitely make that character."

Adds Hudson: "Any character that is over-the-top and gets to wear hats and has the fabulous costumes is so much fun to play as an actor. It's a throwback to old movies and old Hollywood but still modern, and that's something that Rian was able to do in the whodunit genre. ... You just don't read characters like that very often, that truly pop off the page and then are supported by such a nuanced writer. She's not like a one-note flamboyant character — she is layered and has purpose and motivation and all of the things that you need to give to characters for a good whodunit."

For Craig's Blanc, Eagan carried through some design elements from the first film, like the bold and colorful neckties. "There's also some silliness to Benoit that we wanted to keep there," adds Eagan.

(Beware, spoilers ahead!)

In the case of Monáe, who plays both Andi, Bron's estranged

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partner, and Andi's twin sister Helen, costuming was especially critical. Eagan and her team began by outfitting Andi because, Eagan says, it would serve as a base for Helen's character. For Andi, Eagan used circular shapes and straight lines that were very determined and bold with strong colors. The most difficult costume to nail down was the suit Monáe wears in the final sequences — given the amount of action required of Monáe in those scenes — to ensure the actress was both safe and comfortable.

Monáe says she felt like she was playing three characters — Andi, Helen and Helen-as-Andi, and so she kept three different notebooks "to manage the energies."

She says: "The first two weeks, we stayed a lot more on Helen pretending to be Andi because we were in Greece. It was the most fun and challenging thing I've done to date, in the best possible way. I'm thankful for all the films I've done, from *Moonlight* to *Hidden Figures* to a show like *Homecoming.* When I look back, honestly, it was really setting me up for this role. I can see that I've used everything I've learned for this sort of role."

Once all the characters meet up in the film, after lounging by the pool and strolling in the surrounding gardens, they converge in the central atrium of Bron's home that Heinrichs designed as a mix of clashing styles, with dozens of glass sculptures and even da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, which Bron has secreted out of the Louvre.

"He's someone who needs to impress and show off, and this is how he exerts power," Heinrichs says of the way the set helped to delineate Bron's commanding character. "[The dining area] is almost like a Greek pavilion. I've been to The Met in New York, and they have these little temples that have been extracted from archaeological sites, so I thought that makes sense for this character."

Adds Johnson: "That space was crazy because when you actually walked onto the set, it was so ugly — it assaulted your eyes because it's all these things that don't fit. You have a faux classic Greek ruin on one end and then this weird Death Star-like floor with all these plinths with the glass, and then you have this weird '70s-like orgy pit with a red couch. It's like an interior designer threw up on it. But when you film it through a camera, you start separating the sections out and it looks gorgeous in a weird way that doesn't make sense."

Johnson decided to include the *Mona Lisa* — actually copied from photos of the original by scenic painter James Gemmill — because it was a "sacred cow and was something the audience could really be appropriately in awe of. She's always watching [and] also the ambiguity of her smile. There are a lot of things where, thematically, it made a lot of sense to put that front and center."

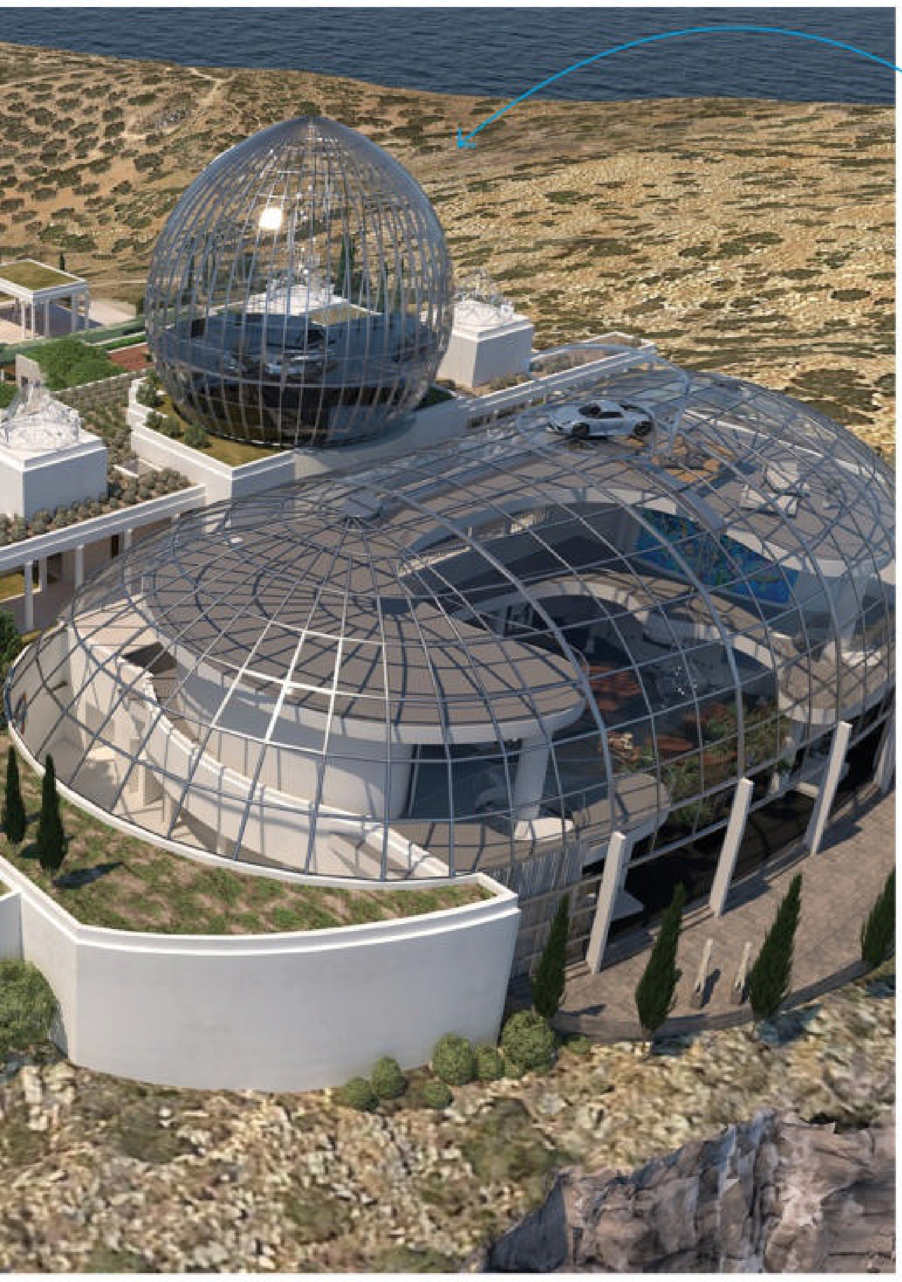
Juggling so many characters in the same space was the "most challenging thing," the director says, "especially when you start dealing with that sequence in the atrium, where it's very specific in terms of what you want the audience to notice and not notice, and you're planting clues, hopefully in subtle ways but that are also in plain sight. There's a lot of math going on."

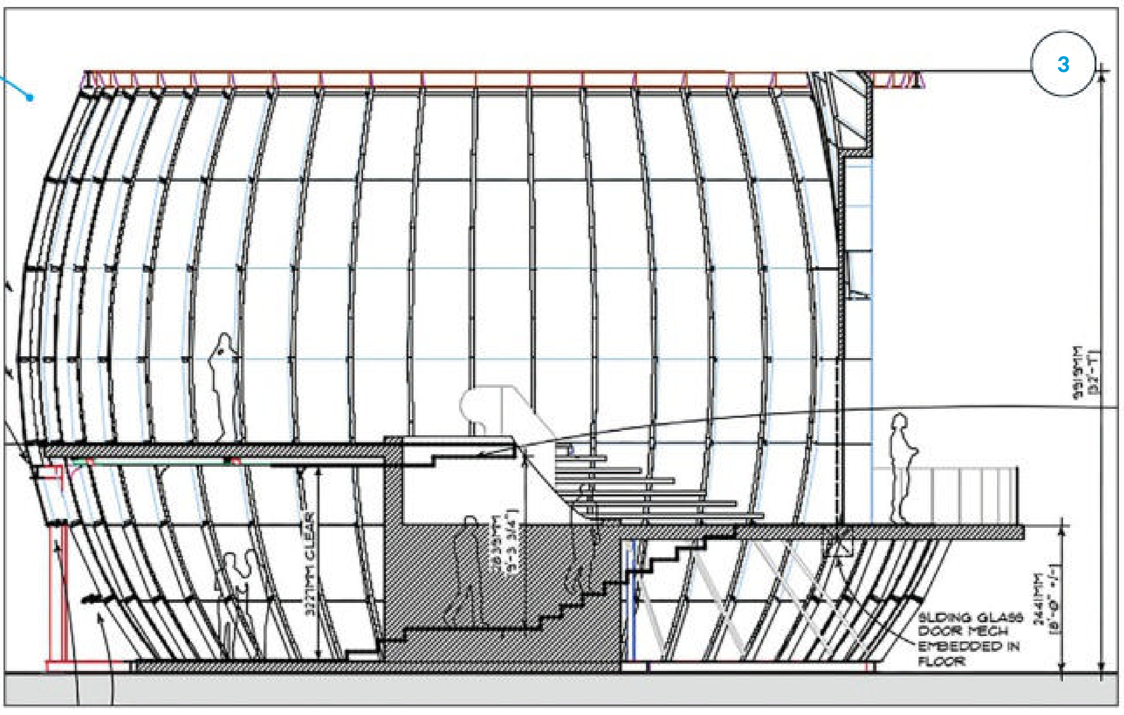
Film editor Bob Ducsay was charged with not only making sure every principal character had ample screen time but also that enough tension was built into the scenes leading up to the grand reveal. At the same time, he had to edit the film in such a way that the audience wouldn't feel "manipulated" when the case was solved, he says, so clues had to be in plain sight without being too obvious.

Further complicating matters was the fact that the main set contained so much reflective glass. But cinematographer Steve Yedlin — who worked with Johnson on *Looper*, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* and the first *Knives Out* — says rather than try to avoid reflections, his team embraced them. "We said, 'Let's make sure there are reflections.' We didn't want to just get *rid* of reflections, because that would be the same as not having any glass — like a 1940s movie where the glass door just didn't have any glass. We wanted to see the glass — glass is in the title of the movie. So, number one was making sure that we had good reflections."

The film's big finale, involving extensive VFX work, required extra careful planning since not only does it involve Blanc solving

GLASS, JOHNSON: JOHN WILSON/NETFLIX. EXTERIOR, SKETCH: COURTESY OF RICK HEINRICHS/NETFLIX.





1 From left: Norton, Cline and Craig. Eagan was inspired by '50s and '60s terry cloth sets for Benoit Blanc's swimwear. **2** The Aman Villa 20 in Porto Heli, Greece, served as the exterior for tech billionaire Bron's mansion, and the glass onion dome was added with VFX. **3** A sketch of the glass onion structure by production designer Rick Heinrichs. **4** Johnson filming in the atrium, which was designed like "an interior designer threw up on it."

the central mystery, but the reveal leads to wholesale destruction, with most of the principal cast joining in. There were only two sets of glass sculptures on hand, so it was all about "practice," says Johnson. "We only had two takes of the actual smashing of the glass sculpture. We had been tiptoeing around these delicate glass structures the whole shoot. All the actors were so ready to start smashing them up. They were actually calling dibs on which ones they wanted to smash. It was just prep and you have a lot of meetings and a lot of diagramming it out."

Adds Monáe: "I loved breaking the glass. It was cathartic. I was ready!"

Heinrichs notes that while they were preparing the sets in Serbia for the finale, a prop warehouse burned down as they were trying to figure out how to make all the glass sculptures for inside the atrium: "We had to make two or three out of everything, but the heat of the glass would destroy the molds, so we made them out of resin. But our whole resin operation got shut down by the fire." Instead, they sent everything up to glass factories in Prague.

Of course, the grand finale also includes the burning of the *Mona Lisa*. Johnson says that Craig was "a little bit nervous" about destroying the most famous painting in the world, even if it was fiction. "He was like, 'Are people going to turn on us when we burn down the *Mona Lisa*?' " says Johnson. "It's almost more famous for being famous than it is for being a work of art people have a deep connection to, and I think it's so much of a sacred cow that people get the joke."

> "It was the most fun and challenging thing I've done to date in the best possible way. I've used everything I've learned for this sort of role."
> **JANELLE MONÁE, ON HER CHARACTER**

Netflix granted the finished film a one-week run in about 600 theaters — including the three major chains, AMC, Regal and Cinemark — on Nov. 23, in advance of *Glass Onion* debuting on the streaming service Dec. 23. And while Johnson would still like to see more theatrical dates for the film, he defends his and producer Ram Bergman's decision to go with Netflix.

Between the release of the two *Knives Out* films, COVID had upended the exhibition business and streamers had rewritten distribution models. Says Johnson: "The world had changed since we put the first movie out. It's not like it was a choice between Netflix and the theatrical experience. The theatrical experience of *Knives Out* didn't exist anymore. The reality was, if we had sold the movie to another studio, the great likelihood is they would turn around and flip it to a streamer, so it would be day-and-date regardless. Netflix was the right choice to go with."

Offers Bergman, "We were already in preproduction on the second, and we were still in the midst of the pandemic and had no idea what the world would look like. Today, I still don't know what the world looks like. The guys at Netflix made the most aggressive offer, and you could see they believed in it." Even though box office analysts charge that Netflix left money on the table by limiting *Glass Onion*'s theatrical run, Bergman says of the experiment: "I hope it's the first step toward doing this with more movies and figuring out how to calibrate a new way of releasing movies. We can see what's going on in the theaters, and it's not pretty — so maybe there is a different model and maybe you can show the world, whether it's the streamers or the studios or the exhibitors, that those things can coexist."

For his part, Johnson has already started thinking about the third *Knives Out* mystery: "I've very vaguely started clustering ideas together. I'm really excited about the challenge of figuring out something that's thrillingly different from both of them, and that feels scary but still gives the pleasures of a fun murder mystery." Johnson adds that the franchise has a creative hold on him at the moment: "I thought that I was going to do something completely different before I did the next Benoit Blanc mystery, but every time I start thinking about other stuff, my brain just comes back to this. It's the most exciting thing in the world to me. I feel like it's an endlessly malleable genre and I would be absolutely thrilled to come back every couple of years and do another one of these for as long as we can."

Echoes Craig: "As long as we can keep entertaining people, we will keep making them." THR

"We wanted to tell this story through the donkey's eyes. That's why there's no linear narrative," says Skolimowski of Janus Films' *EO*. The director is pictured below with Tako, one of the six donkeys cast as the title character.

INTERNATIONAL FEATURE

'Like Tom Cruise, He Does His Own Stunts'

Legendary Polish writer-director Jerzy Skolimowski and writing partner Ewa Piaskowska rave about the donkey actors they worked with on the set of their Oscar-shortlisted film, *EO*

BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH

Before making *EO*, their dreamy tale of a donkey traveling across Europe, director Jerzy Skolimowski and his partner/co-screenwriter Ewa Piaskowska had been playing with the idea of making an animal the protagonist of their next film, following their 2010 award-winning drama *Essential Killing*. But they couldn't decide on the species. "We eliminated cats and dogs. There are too many movies about cats and dogs already," Skolimowski says. "But otherwise — pigs, sheep, cows — it was all open."

Then, on holiday in Sicily over Christmas, they stumbled on a reenactment of the biblical story of the birth of Jesus. The manger scene involved hundreds of extras, both human and animal. "There were chickens and geese, pigs and sheep. A cow. It was a whole zoo," Skolimowski recalls. "In the midst of this enormous cacophony, in the corner, I noticed this donkey: standing without making a sound, just looking on the whole scene with these enormous eyes and this incredible melancholy."

They knew they'd found their star. "Those two enormous eyes seemed mysterious and nearly metaphysical, like mirrors into the universe," says Skolimowski. "We knew this is an animal the audience would stay with for a whole film."

They were right. After premiering in Cannes, where it won the Jury Prize, *EO* has become a surprise awards favorite, making the Oscar shortlist for best international feature. Skolimowski and Piaskowska tell *THR* about donkey casting, taking an animal's-eye view of storytelling and how they convinced Isabelle Huppert to play second fiddle to an ass.

You have six donkeys playing the eponymous EO in the movie. How did you go about casting them?

JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI When we saw the Nativity scene in Sicily, I got so excited I wanted to record it on film immediately, so I called my friends in Poland, and within 48 hours we filmed it. We thought that would be the final scene of our film, the donkey ending up in this Christmas pageant. [The scene was eventually cut.] When we flew back to Poland, we realized we were stuck with this special species of donkey, this Sardinian donkey. I called my animal handlers in Poland and asked, "Find me every Sardinian donkey in Poland." They found three. The first we met was Tako. Then we met this beautiful lady donkey, Hola. They're the main stars.

EWA PIASKOWSKA Tako is the action star. When EO is crossing rivers, or walking through the forest, all those sequences, that's Tako. Like Tom Cruise, he does all his own stunts.

SKOLIMOWSKI But when we needed a beautiful close-up of EO's eyes or nose, then it's Hola. About 80 percent of the movie is those two. But for the ending of the film, in Italy, we didn't want to transport them, because that's too stressful for them, so we cast two other replacement couples: Marietta and Ettore, and Rocco and Mela. The remaining 20 percent of the movie, it's the Italian donkeys.

How do you direct a donkey?

SKOLIMOWSKI You don't. You can't tell a donkey, "No, pretend to be sad." It's about improvisation, trying to create a certain atmosphere and then hunting for your chances. Quite early in the shooting, I understood that the more time I spent with the donkeys, the better results I'll get on set. So, whenever we had some extra free time, instead of going and having a drink, I hung out in the horse wagons with my donkeys, gently whispering, patting their backs, making friends. Shooting scenes, I'd whisper to them — quietly, so as not to disturb the soundtrack, using that special tone of voice you use with your pets, to make them feel safe and secure.

PIASKOWSKA There were certainly no script readings, no discussions about motivation — "Why does my character cross the bridge now?" But the animals were the VIPs on this set. They had the biggest trailer. Jerzy didn't even have a trailer because it was a low-budget movie. The donkeys were the last to arrive on set and the first to leave. And in picking the entire crew, we made sure we had people who clearly love animals. There was no shouting, no raised voices on set. Everyone had to dance around the animals. It actually made the whole experience incredibly pleasant and joyful.

How did you convince Isabelle Huppert to do her cameo in the film?

SKOLIMOWSKI She's a well-known animal lover, so I asked her, based on that fact, if she'd help us out. Her presence really adds to the film — not just her performance, but just adding her name to the film helped us a lot. But you'll notice that all the human stories in the film have been cut down to the absolute minimum. They are more like vignettes. The humans are secondary. We wanted to tell this story through the donkey's eyes. That's why there's no linear narrative. It's not structured like a human story.

Is that also how you shot it, to give the donkey's perspective?

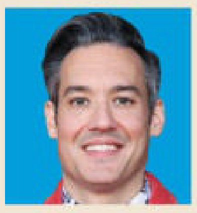
SKOLIMOWSKI We told the story through the donkey's eyes. Of course we had a few master shots to show the general situation and the other characters, but then we always get to our favorite shot, which is the close-up of the donkey's eyes and then the reverse angle to show what the donkey sees, to show his point of view. It's very ambiguous and very mysterious, but definitely a different point of view. Since we can't have donkey dialogue, I asked my composer, Pawel Mykietyn, to try to get into the donkey's head and use his music to express the donkey's inner monologue. Our hope is that you start to identify with the animal and see things from their perspective. I can only say what an effect it had on us. We aren't vegetarians yet, but now we eat maybe a quarter of the meat we did before making this movie. After making the movie, half of our crew stopped eating meat completely.

Interview edited for length and clarity.

DIRECTING

Debut Directors Aim for a DGA Honor

One of these helmers may earn the guild's award for best first feature

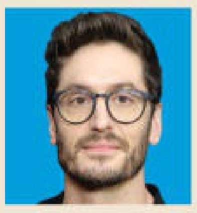


Eric Appel ***Weird: The Al Yankovic Story***
Famous parody musician "Weird Al" Yankovic co-wrote the script of his own satirical biopic, which stars Daniel Radcliffe in the title role. Appel's film charts Yankovic's rise to fame as well as his fictionalized relationship with Madonna (Evan Rachel Wood).

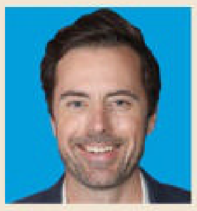
Elegance Bratton ***The Inspection***
Bratton's first narrative feature (he helmed the 2019 doc *Pier Kids*) is an autobiographical drama chronicling the story of a gay man (Jeremy Pope) who joins the Marines when he feels he has nowhere to turn after being rejected by his homophobic mother (Gabrielle Union).

Mariama Diallo ***Master***
Regina Hall leads this horror film as Gail Bishop, the first Black woman to serve as dean of students at a prestigious college. Along with two other Black women at the school, Gail soon discovers a disturbing underlying presence at the predominantly white institution.

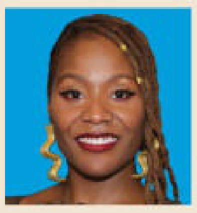
Adamma Ebo ***Honk for Jesus. Save Your Soul.***
After a major sex scandal, the power couple (Regina Hall again, this time with Sterling K. Brown) running a Southern Baptist megachurch are forced to close its doors. Ebo's comedy sees them hiring a documentary crew to capture their attempts to reopen.



Parker Finn ***Smile***
This box office giant — it has earned more than $216 million worldwide — tells the story of a therapist who, after witnessing a traumatic event, begins to believe she is being haunted by something otherworldly. Finn adapted it from his 2020 short film, *Laura Hasn't Slept*.

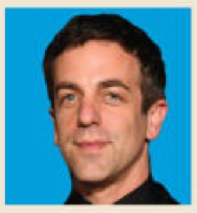


John Patton Ford ***Emily the Criminal***
Aubrey Plaza earned a Gotham Award nomination for playing the title character in Ford's crime thriller about a young woman who, saddled with student loan debt, becomes involved in a large-scale credit-card-scam ring.

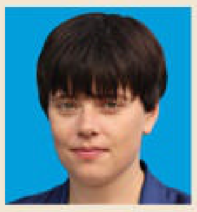


Nikyatu Jusu ***Nanny***
Jusu's *Nanny* was the first horror film to win Sundance's Grand Jury Prize. It follows an undocumented Senegalese woman who takes a job as a caregiver for an affluent family in Manhattan, where an unsettling entity — possibly from her past — begins to haunt her.

Lila Neugebauer ***Causeway***
Theater director Neugebauer's film debut unites Oscar winner Jennifer Lawrence with *Atlanta* star Brian Tyree Henry for a rich character study about an Army veteran returning to her hometown after suffering a brain injury while stationed in Afghanistan.



B.J. Novak ***Vengeance***
The Office veteran Novak directs, writes and stars in this dark comedy about a New York journalist who travels south to investigate the death of a girl with whom he had a brief fling, seeking to turn the murder mystery into a podcast.



Charlotte Wells ***Aftersun***
Wells won the Gotham Award for breakthrough director with her self-described "emotionally autobiographical" film that follows Sophie, who reflects on a trip she took to a past-its-prime resort with her father, Calum (Paul Mescal), 20 years earlier. — HILTON DRESDEN

EO: COURTESY OF BFI. SKOLIMOWSKI: MICHAŁ ENGLERT. APPEL: CINDY ORD/GETTY IMAGES FOR SCAD. BRATTON: DOMINIK BINDL/GETTY IMAGES. DIALLO: DIA DIPASUPIL/GETTY IMAGES. EBO: MIIKKA SKAFFARI/GETTY IMAGES. FINN: AMY SUSSMAN/GETTY IMAGES. FORD: LIA TOBY/GETTY IMAGES FOR BFI. JUSU: ANDREW CHIN/GETTY IMAGES. NEUGEBAUER: GARETH CATTERMOLE/GETTY IMAGES FOR BFI. NOVAK: JON KOPALOFF/GETTY IMAGES. WELLS: CINDY ORD/GETTY IMAGES FOR FLC.

Two-time Oscar winner Justin Hurwitz scored *Babylon*, directed by longtime collaborator and friend Damien Chazelle.

ORIGINAL SCORE

From a College Band, a Movie-Music Collab

Oscar-winning composer Justin Hurwitz reunited with frequent collaborator (and onetime bandmate) Damien Chazelle for *Babylon*'s ambitious jazz score

BY MESFIN FEKADU

Almost two decades ago during his freshman year at Harvard, Justin Hurwitz wanted to form a rock band and heard of an incredible drummer named Damien Chazelle. “Somebody gave me Damien’s phone number,” Hurwitz recalls, “and I called him up cold and asked, ‘Do you want to be in a band?’ And we started a band with three other classmates.”

A year later, Hurwitz and Chazelle decided they had another passion they wanted to pursue: film. They began working on what would eventually become their first movie, *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench*.

But their former bandmates, D.A. Wallach and Maxwell Drummey, were at work too — garnering interest from the likes of Kanye West and Pharrell Williams, who ultimately signed them to a record deal as indie-rock duo Chester French. “I was beside myself. I was like, ‘What have I done?’ Like, I quit this band. This was our shot. This was our chance. And it felt terrible,” says Hurwitz. “We were seniors, and our former bandmates were getting flown around by these moguls. Kanye and Pharrell brought them out, and they’re being offered these big deals. And Damien and I were working on a student film. This is before it got into any film festivals, and we had no idea if or when the film stuff was ever going to work out for us.”

Jovan Adepo as fictional trumpet player Sidney Palmer in Paramount’s *Babylon*.

Clearly, Hurwitz and Chazelle made the right decision: Hurwitz won two Academy Awards for his work on 2016’s *La La Land*, and Chazelle became the youngest person to ever win the best director Oscar, at 32.

The duo’s credits also include *Whiplash*, *First Man* and most recently *Babylon*, which features more than two hours of original music and is Hurwitz’s most ambitious project to date. The score has been shortlisted for an Oscar and earned Golden Globe and Critics Choice Award noms.

“My big takeaways when I first read the script in 2019 was: ‘My God, what an entertaining script, and holy shit, that’s going to be a lot of music,’ ” says Hurwitz. He spoke with *THR* about finding extraordinary musicians to create the sound for *Babylon*, channeling his late grandfather in music and fulfilling his rock-star ambitions.

What made you gravitate more toward film music in college instead of being in the band?

My family would go to the symphony a few times a year and I loved orchestral music. Once I started getting the dream of writing for an orchestra, films just seemed like the obvious medium for that. I love what film music can do and what it can be, and how emotional it can be, and how it can stick with people. John Williams’ scores really stuck with me growing up — the way that scores can become inextricable from a movie, like how the *Jurassic Park* theme just becomes *Jurassic Park*. That movie and that theme, you can’t separate them. They’re one and the same. It’s so powerful what film music could do.

Do you still want to be a rock star?

Not a rock star, but I love performing our music live for people. I love being in front of a crowd, which is why I love the concerts that I do, and I’m going to do more of them next year. I’ve heard so many stories of families bringing their kids and hearing that this is the first time their kids have seen a live orchestra. That’s so incredibly meaningful to me because parents aren’t taking their kids these days to see Mahler or Beethoven. Film music is how the new generations are being introduced to orchestra music. To get to be that gateway drug to orchestra music for the

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a shortfilm by **SANTIAGO REQUEJO**

Awards Publicity Agency: JJPR
Please contact: joshua@joshuajasonpr.com or alvar@joshuajasonpr.com

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DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JAVIER BERMEJO ART DIRECTOR CAROLINA VITA COSTUME DESIGN EVA ESCRIBANO EDITED BY LUCAS SÁNCHEZ CASTING SERGIO CALLEJA PRODUCED BY CARLOS SANZ SANTIAGO REQUEJO Y TONO ESCUDERO WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY SANTIAGO REQUEJO

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younger generation is unbelievably meaningful to me.

How was composing for *Babylon* different from films like *La La Land* and *First Man*?

I wanted to search for really interesting musicians, which I've never done before. I wanted some very specific voices, so I went on YouTube and I started looking for trumpeters, and I found this trumpeter Sean Jones. I was like, "Oh my God, I think that's the trumpet sound. That's the sound of Sidney [Palmer, played in the film by Jovan Adepo]."

We ended up with a few musicians who were really, really special. Dontae Winslow ended up becoming a huge part of this score. He played some of the really, really important pieces on the score. And Ludovic Louis, who came from Paris, also became a really important trumpet sound of the score.

And then sax-wise, I found, again on YouTube, this guy Leo Pellegrino. I started searching YouTube for, "Who plays dance music on a sax?" There were these viral videos from 10 or 15 years ago of this guy busking in the New York subway, playing baritone sax and literally dancing while he plays and kicking his legs. It was Leo and this drummer, and they became this band called Too Many Zooz.

They played on Beyoncé's *Lemonade*.

Oh, OK! I think I've heard that before. And then the third really important musician is this guy Jacob Scesney, also a sax player, who played different kinds of solo stuff. He played all the really wild, unhinged solos in pieces like "Welcome" and "Voodoo Mama." At one point he put his alto and his tenor in his mouth at the same time and he was blowing into both saxes. I had never seen that before.

Will you continue to look for more musicians on YouTube?

Totally. It depends on the score. I found musicians in Philadelphia and Baltimore and all these other places, so it just depends on the style of the music.

When did you first fall in love with music? Was anyone in your family musically inclined?

My parents are not musicians. In fact, my dad is the least musical person I've ever met in my life. But his dad was a great, great saxophone player named Herman, which is why I keep naming these tracks "Herman." There was a track in *La La Land* called "Herman's Habit" and I named a track in *Babylon* "Herman's Hustle." I never knew my grandfather. He died when I was 1 year old, but I've heard my whole life about what a great musician he was and how similar he was to me, in terms of personality.

When I was 10, I got a synthesizer and a sequencer so I could create my own music and I could layer tracks, and I found that addictive. I would just go to my bedroom and do it for hours and hours. I recognized at the time that this is something I really love — and that this is something I should consider doing forever.

Interview edited for length and clarity.

PRODUCERS

They Brought Us Back to the Movies

These Oscar contenders all soared beyond $100 million at the global box office — and the producers behind them are in the running for the Darryl F. Zanuck Award, the PGA's top prize

AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER
$1.4 billion
James Cameron, Jon Landau

The sequel to the 2009 box office behemoth (which earned Cameron and Landau their second nom for the PGA award; they won in 1998 for *Titanic*) is a similar critical success — and its box office totals will likely rise as audiences keep returning to Pandora.

THE BATMAN
$771 million
Dylan Clark, Matt Reeves

Reeves' gritty, three-hour action epic brought audiences a new version of the caped crusader (this time played with brooding magnetism by Robert Pattinson), effectively relaunching the superhero franchise once again for Warner Bros. and DC.

BLACK PANTHER: WAKANDA FOREVER
$820 million
Kevin Feige, Nate Moore

Disney/Marvel's return to Wakanda — a film that also serves as a tribute to late actor Chadwick Boseman — recaptured the spectacle of Ryan Coogler's first *Black Panther*, which earned Feige a nom for the PGA award as well as an Oscar nom for best picture.

ELVIS
$286 million
Gail Berman, Baz Luhrmann, Catherine Martin, Patrick McCormick, Schuyler Weiss

The musical biopic of the King of Rock 'n' Roll is a return to form for director Luhrmann, who previously won the PGA award in 2002 for *Moulin Rouge!* Berman, meanwhile, recently stepped down as co-president of the PGA after serving in the role since 2018.

EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE
$104 million
Dan Kwan, Daniel Scheinert, Jonathan Wang

The most wildly original film of the year — and one of two on this list not inspired by preexisting IP — comes from the idiosyncratic minds of duo Daniels (who wrote and directed as well as produced). It's also A24's highest-grossing film to date.

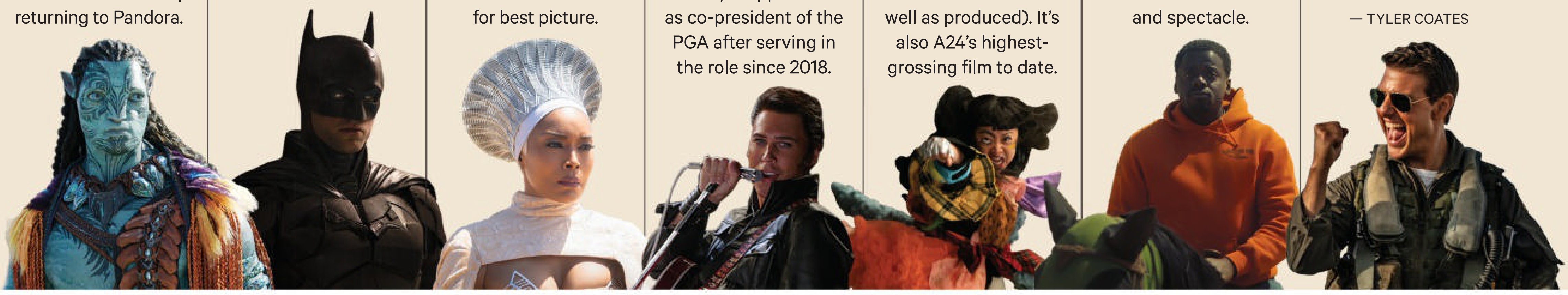
NOPE
$171 million
Ian Cooper, Jordan Peele

Two-time PGA nominee Peele (who earned nods for his debut feature *Get Out* and for producing Spike Lee's *BlacKkKlansman*) returns with another genre-bending thriller that subtly examines the entertainment industry's rabid desire for trauma and spectacle.

TOP GUN: MAVERICK
$1.5 billion
Jerry Bruckheimer, Tom Cruise, David Ellison, Christopher McQuarrie

The biggest film of the year could earn Bruckheimer, one of the most successful and prolific producers in Hollywood, his first PGA nom. It would be Cruise's second — he was nominated in 2004 for *The Last Samurai*.

— TYLER COATES



AVATAR: COURTESY OF 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS. *BATMAN*: JONATHAN OLLEY/WARNER BROS. *PANTHER*: ANNETTE BROWN/MARVEL. *ELVIS*: COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. PICTURES. *ONCE*: COURTESY OF A24. *NOPE*: COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL STUDIOS. *MAVERICK*: SCOTT GARFIELD/PARAMOUNT PICTURES.

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2022

SIFF
JURY AWARD
Best Foreign Short
SONOMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
2022

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Reviews

Television

Alexandra Daddario (*The White Lotus*) plays a gifted New Orleans surgeon exploring a dark, supernaturally charged family legacy.

ALFONSO BRESCIANI/AMC

Mayfair Witches

AMC's sumptuous but exasperating Anne Rice series stars Alexandra Daddario as a doctor who descends from a long line of magic-wielding women **By Angie Han**

On first impression, AMC's *Mayfair Witches* appears as lush as the overgrown yard of the New Orleans bungalow where much of it takes place.

The plot, adapted from Anne Rice's novels (the *Lives of the Mayfair Witches* trilogy), centers on gifted surgeon Rowan (*The White Lotus*' Alexandra Daddario), who discovers she's heir to a dynasty of women with special powers. As she explores her family tree, each gnarled root seems to branch off into knottier tangles still, yielding a saga laden with sex, death and magic and spanning hundreds of years and thousands of miles.

But amid that sordid lore, creators Michelle Ashford (*Masters of Sex*) and Esta Spalding (*On Becoming a God in Central Florida*) make the mistake of prioritizing mythology and mystery over personality and plot. While there's a great deal happening onscreen at every turn — secrets, murders and more — we're offered little reason to get invested in any of it.

Some of that murkiness is purposeful. As the season begins, Rowan Fielding has no inkling of her heritage, let alone the dark legacy attached to it. Once she does make her way to the Mayfairs, she finds a clan that has kept their affairs in the shadows. Though they're superficially welcoming, no member of the family seems to be without ulterior motives — not Cortland (Harry Hamlin), the bon vivant uncle; not uptight Aunt Carlotta (Beth Grant); and probably not perky cousins Josephine (Jen Richards) and Tessa (Madison Wolfe) either.

Woven into the narrative of Rowan's hunt for answers are flashbacks to a 17th century Scottish village, chronicling an earlier generation of Mayfairs whose gift for midwifery attracts suspicion from religious authorities. And sprinkled throughout the dialogue are allusions to other Mayfairs, whose biographies bolster the warning imparted to Rowan during her quest: "Things don't end well for the women in this family." Such hints, combined with a pretty palette of dark jewel tones, are enough to string a viewer along for a while in hopes of a juicy payoff.

There's a point at which an alluring enigma begins to look like frustrating opacity, however, and *Mayfair Witches* crosses it sometime around halfway through its eight-episode season. As of its fifth hourlong installment (the last one sent to critics), the series is still treading the waters of exposition. It's introducing new characters and concepts without explaining the ones already established, and throwing out new plot twists without settling on any perspective or tone. The vivid personalities, overheated grandeur and wry humor of AMC's recent, well-received *Interview With the Vampire*, also based on source material from Rice, are missed.

Even Rowan remains a puzzle, and not by design. We're given a handful of details about who she's meant to be: a doctor who cares about healing, a wanderer who lives on a houseboat, an adoptee aching to connect with her birth family. But the narrative renders her almost entirely reactive — an innocent reeling from shock or a pawn to be manipulated rather than a heroine allowed to make choices of her own volition — and Daddario struggles to pull together this jumble of traits into a coherent personality.

Far more memorable, though used much more sparingly, is Lasher, a shapeshifting entity bound to the family for generations. Jack Huston is well cast as the being's most common form, a graceful man with a cryptic smile and a smoky voice, and he's able to conjure sparks with nearly everyone he encounters. He becomes the most potent manifestation of the desire coursing underneath much of *Mayfair Witches*' story, his powers casting illusions that tap into the truest wants of his victims. Those dreams are often (though not always) romantic in nature, and many of the series' most evocative scenes are sexual fantasies shot in a fevered haze, as if their participants' senses have overcome their reason.

AIRDATE 9 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 8 (AMC)
CAST Alexandra Daddario, Jack Huston, Tongayi Chirisa, Harry Hamlin
CREATORS Esta Spalding, Michelle Ashford

For your consideration
Best Live Action Short Film

DIRECTED BY
BEATRIZ DE SILVA
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But if *Mayfair Witches* taps into a mood of longing, it's less legible about what exactly these characters want and why. One subplot has commitment-phobe Rowan striking up a romance with Ciprien (Tongayi Chirisa), who's been assigned by some arcane organization to protect her. Yet the relationship is so thinly written that it's unclear whether we're meant to be rooting for a genuine love or fretting that the two have fallen under some kind of otherworldly influence. Oddest of all, there's little sense of what's at stake in these arcs — not even Lasher's, though clearly his goals are vile enough that some of the Mayfairs will stoop to unthinkable acts to stop him.

Nowhere is the series' vagueness more noticeable than in the otherwise intriguing fifth episode, in which Lasher tries his best to appeal to a trapped Rowan. "You want pleasure. Sovereignty. You want to be adored. You want cake," he purrs. Not only is his analysis generic (don't most people want pleasure, adoration and cake?), it struck me that I had no idea if he was actually right about Rowan. Even after hours spent with her, I couldn't have told you what she wanted beyond more information about her past.

Early in her journey, Rowan sighs, "I really miss the world making sense" — only for Ciprien to point out that it never did, and she simply didn't realize it. The moment comes after Rowan has started to realize how strange her family history truly is but before she has begun to grasp what any of it means for her. Presumably, she'll eventually get a grip on this new "world behind the world" and find a way to bend it to her own will — or be crushed by it.

For those of us existing outside the Mayfair universe, though, the calculation is different. Absent characters worth loving or a plot clear enough to follow, what we're left with is faint exasperation at a world that, for all its superficial and fleeting charms, seems to make no sense at all. THR

John Larroquette returns as lawyer Dan Fielding, with Melissa Rauch as a new night judge.

JORDAN ALTHAUS/NBC/WARNER BROS. TELEVISION

Night Court

John Larroquette is back before the bench in NBC's highly erratic reboot of the Emmy-winning '80s sitcom

By Daniel Fienberg

Over its nine-season, 193-episode run, NBC's *Night Court* had a lot going for it. The Manhattan courtroom setting offered an array of cases that let the show shift from outlandish to topical, ridiculous to borderline sincere. The ensemble was solid and, in the case of four-time Emmy winner John Larroquette, occasionally spectacular.

One thing it didn't have going for it was consistency. The broad humor could veer into hackiness, the attempts at candor could stray into mawkishness. Shifts within the supporting cast meant that writers were constantly trying, not always successfully, to tailor new parts to new actors, knowing that they would always be behind Larroquette in punchlines and Harry Anderson in screen time.

Audiences can look forward to experiencing the inconsistencies of *Night Court* anew with NBC's reboot: Through its first six episodes, the show swings back and forth between somewhat promising and thoroughly embalmed, with a still-fruitful setting often wasted by writers who aren't sure how to adapt the format to a very different era.

Like the original created by Reinhold Weege, this *Night Court* — Dan Rubin is credited as developer of the update — starts with a young judge joining the night shift at arraignment court. Judge Abby Stone (Melissa Rauch), daughter of the late Harry Stone (Anderson), shares her father's progressive philosophy and quirky personality. In need of a new public defender capable of competing with ambitious assistant DA Olivia (India de Beaufort), she recruits down-on-his-luck Dan Fielding (Larroquette). Managing Abby's docket is clerk Neil (Kapil Talwalkar), while order is maintained by intimidating bailiff Donna "Gurgs" Gurganous (Lacretta).

The writers have picked some new cases that recall the old, like the woman who insists she's a werewolf. Other cases are used to make character-driven points; Abby, for example, worries she might be too sentimental, only to be reminded that sentimentality is her family's core judicial superpower.

Abby is a tamped-down version of Rauch's Bernadette from *The Big Bang Theory* — easy to overlook because of her helium voice and enthusiasm but exceptionally brainy. Rauch has sharp timing, though Abby's serious backstory falls flat due to piecemeal writing.

By virtue of a clearly defined role — striving and officious — de Beaufort is the most comfortable of the new actors. Lacretta suffers from Gurgs being more punchline machine than character and Talwalkar from the writers forgetting to define Neil at all.

Fans will be most interested to reunite with Larroquette, and he is, predictably, the standout. It isn't that Dan has evolved in the 30 years since we saw him. The Dan Fielding we knew in the '80s couldn't believably exist in 2023, nor at Larroquette's current age, and there's humor in his narcissism and chauvinism popping up as he finds himself professionally forced to do altruistic things.

Some episodes build to silliness and others to semi-dramatic beats, and there's no evident pattern as to which version works best. The third episode, featuring Wendie Malick as a potential love interest for Dan, barely sets foot in the courtroom but offers some sharp writing and the pleasure of watching Malick and Larroquette spar. On the other hand, the last episode sent to critics, with Pete Holmes as Abby's out-of-town boyfriend, is one cringeworthy exchange after another. Brace for the unevenness; some things never change.

AIRDATE 8 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 17 (NBC)
CAST Melissa Rauch, John Larroquette, India de Beaufort, Kapil Talwalkar, Lacretta
CREATOR Reinhold Weege, developed by Dan Rubin

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HOSTED BY

CAROLYN GIARDINA

Tech Editor

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THE Hollywood REPORTER

A New Era for the Golden Globes?

The telecast, in its final year on NBC, is auditioning for its future

By Scott Feinberg

Awards Preview

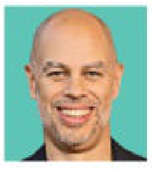
Jerrod Carmichael will host the Globes' return to broadcast festivities on Jan. 10.

After a year off the air following scandal, upheaval and reforms at the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the Golden Globe Awards will return to TV on Jan. 10. With the broadcast of the 80th edition of the ceremony, which will be hosted by comedian **Jerrod Carmichael** and produced by awards show vet **Jesse Collins**, the HFPA is essentially auditioning for its future, given that its (recently renegotiated) deal with longtime partner NBC expires at night's end. At a time when all awards shows are struggling to find audiences (the SAG Awards won't even be televised this year), and the industry is still figuring out how it feels about the HFPA's efforts to reform itself (few stars publicly acknowledged their nominations, but several studios noted them in advertisements and on billboards), what should one expect from the Globes? It's hard to say.

Whether enough of Hollywood's big names return — and some, like best drama actor nominee **Brendan Fraser**, have pledged not to — the Globes will face an uphill climb to generate strong ratings due in part to Carmichael not yet being a household name and NBC slating the show for a Tuesday evening, ostensibly to avoid a conflict with *Sunday Night Football*.

However, Globes voters have, predictably, nominated a ton of A-listers — the best original song category alone includes **Lady Gaga**, **Rihanna** and **Taylor Swift** — and if even a fraction show up, NBC's promotion of the show as "the party of the year" might not seem hyperbolic. The show has lined up presenters like **Quentin Tarantino, Ana de Armas** and **Natasha Lyonne**, and the attendance of **Eddie Murphy** and **Ryan Murphy** is assured: They already have agreed to accept the Cecil B. DeMille Award and Carol Burnett Award, respectively.

This year's Globe nominations were determined by 96 HFPA members (journalists who cover Hollywood for non-American outlets) and — for the first time, as a result of reforms aimed at increasing the diversity of the electorate — 103 international voters. Unlike the HFPA, the new voters are relatively diverse — and won't receive the five-figure salary that organization members will receive as a result of the HFPA's switch from nonprofit to for-profit after an acquisition by Eldridge Industries. (*The Hollywood Reporter* is owned by PME Holdings, a joint venture between Penske Media Corp. and Eldridge.) Perhaps because of the influx of voters based abroad, the most notable thing about this year's film noms is how much they tip toward non-Americans who have been on the periphery of the awards conversation. *Elvis* was recognized with expected noms for best drama and best drama actor (**Austin Butler**), and also best director for Aussie **Baz Luhrmann** — over the American directors of fellow best picture nominees *Babylon* (**Damien Chazelle**), *Tár* (**Todd Field**) and *Top Gun: Maverick* (**Joseph Kosinski**). Luhrmann's fellow Aussie **Hugh Jackman** was nominated for best drama actor for *The Son*, despite the film's 42 percent standing on Rotten Tomatoes, over *Top Gun: Maverick*'s **Tom Cruise** (I'm sure Cruise returning his three Golden Globes to the HFPA in the wake of the recent controversy didn't endear him to the group).



Collins

Golden Globe Awards

Jan. 10
Beverly Hilton

The ballroom of the Beverly Hilton, which once again will play host to the Golden Globes in 2023.

Meanwhile, alongside Jackman, Mexican **Diego Calva** (*Babylon*) and Brit **Ralph Fiennes** (*The Menu*) were selected over **Tom Hanks** (*A Man Called Otto*) and **Adam Sandler** (*Hustle*). And, in the drama actress race, Brit **Olivia Colman** (*Empire of Light*) and Cuban Ana de Armas (*Blonde*) were nominated for their poorly reviewed films — 45 and 42 percent, respectively, on Rotten Tomatoes — over stars of several acclaimed films, **Danielle Deadwyler** (*Till*), **Jennifer Lawrence** (*Causeway*) and **Zoe Kazan** (*She Said*). In the supporting races, Irishman **Barry Keoghan** (*The Banshees of Inisherin*) was picked over *The Fabelmans*' **Paul Dano** and **Judd Hirsch** and *Elvis*' Hanks, while Filipina **Dolly de Leon** (*Triangle of Sadness*) made the cut and **Janelle Monáe** (*Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*), **Keke Palmer** (*Nope*) and **Gabrielle Union** (*The Inspection*) did not.

A final observation about the film nominations: In an era in which streaming services are supposedly taking over, only one film from a streamer cracked into either of the two best picture categories: Netflix's *Glass Onion*, on the musical/comedy side. THR

COLLINS: KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES. BALLROOM: PAUL DRINKWATER/NBCU PHOTO BANK/NBCUNIVERSAL VIA GETTY IMAGES. AWARD: COURTESY OF GOLDEN GLOBE. CARMICHAEL: WILL HEATH/NBC/NBCU PHOTO BANK VIA GETTY IMAGES. MURPHY: MICHAEL KOVAC/GETTY IMAGES. *ONION*: JOHN WILSON/NETFLIX. *BANSHEES*: JONATHAN HESSION/SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES.

‘We Knew We Weren’t Going to Alter History’ Bringing Super Bowl LI to the big screen in *80 for Brady*

By Gregg Kilday

From left: It’s game day for Rita Moreno, Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Sally Field.

How do you create suspense in a movie built around Super Bowl LI, the legendary 2017 matchup between the New England Patriots and Atlanta Falcons, which saw the Patriots trail the Falcons 28-3 in the third quarter only to rally and win 34-28 in overtime? That was one of the challenges facing **Kyle Marvin** when he agreed to direct *80 for Brady*, which will have its world premiere Jan. 6 as the opening-night film at the 34th annual Palm Springs International Film Festival.

Palm Springs Film Festival

Jan. 5-16

Marvin — who, along with his writing and producing partner **Michael Angelo Covino**, starred in 2019’s *The Climb*, which explored male friendship — tackles a different sort of friendship in *Brady*. It follows four old friends, spry octogenarians played by **Jane Fonda**, **Lily Tomlin**, **Sally Field** and **Rita Moreno**, traveling to the Super Bowl to cheer on their hero, then-Patriots quarterback **Tom Brady**.

As for the big game, Marvin says: “We knew we weren’t going to alter history or surprise anyone with the outcome of the game. But football also has a lot to do with what people are experiencing while watching it. If you ask, ‘Hey do you remember Super Bowl LI?’ they inevitably will not tell you about the game but where they were and who they were with. Our film is a story that happens at the same time as the game — and our goal is to line up the journey of the football game with the journey of these women.”

Fonda and Tomlin, as well as Brady himself, already were attached to the project, written by **Sarah Haskins** and **Emily Halpern**, when Marvin became involved in the fall of 2021; Field and Moreno were soon added to the cast. “All of these women have defined American comedy the way I think it should be: character-forward, jokes in the back seat,” the director says. “That is how we wrote and angled the characters and how they performed it. Most of the effort and energy went into making sure their relationships felt whole and complete. I know the trailer is very jokey because that’s what trailers do, but hopefully the movie itself leans more on the character journey and the comedy is a bonus.”

Marvin

In addition to acting in and producing the movie, Brady helped the filmmakers work with the NFL, which lent its support, not only approving logos but also providing footage of the game itself. “Some of it,” says Marvin, “includes never-before-seen camera angles from the field [the game took place at NRG Stadium in Houston]. It gave us lots of opportunities to blend the real with the narrative fiction that we’re telling.” Rather than travel to Houston, the production filmed exteriors on sets it constructed at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and Banc of California Stadium in order to take advantage of California tax credits.

Even though the movie’s four principals together account for more than 200 years of show-biz experience, “I didn’t have to make a single allowance for age,” Marvin says. “They were all incredible dynamos. It was more about wrangling their energy and keeping it focused. Lily was always keeping me on my toes — she’s sharper than I will ever be. Jane’s a consummate professional, Sally is incredible, and Rita has more energy than the entire set combined.”

But, he adds of the movie, which Paramount will release Feb. 3 (a week ahead of this year’s Super Bowl): “It’s not a film about age. It’s a film geared more toward a universal feeling of friendship, camaraderie and family.”

SAMPLING THE ECLECTIC LINEUP

Here’s a taste of the 134 films on tap at the PSIFF

↑ ***THE ART OF EATING: THE LIFE OF M.F.K. FISHER***

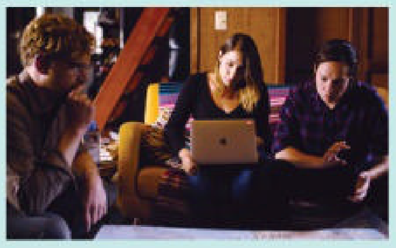
Gregory Bezat’s doc pays tribute to the life and influence of the celebrated author of books like *The Gastronomical Me*.

THE BLUE CAFTAN

On the international Oscar shortlist, this Moroccan film features a shopkeeper and her closeted husband.

↑ ***CLOSE***

Also on the international Oscar shortlist, this Belgian film about two 13-year-old friends is **Lukas Dhont**’s follow-up to *Girl*.



↑ ***THE GRAB***

From the director of *Blackfish* comes an exposé about the world’s superpowers’ control of water and food supplies.

MARS ONE

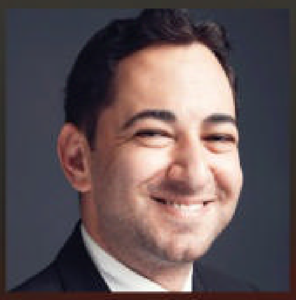
Gabriel Martins’ drama centers on a Brazilian family’s struggles after the election of far-right candidate **Jair Bolsonaro**.

80: COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES. *FISHER*: COURTESY OF BEZAT VIDEO GROUP. *CLOSE*, *GRAB*: COURTESY OF PSIFF.

AWARDS CHATTER
The Hollywood Reporter

LEADING THE RACE OF ENTERTAINMENT PODCASTS

Candid conversations with award season's leading contenders



HOSTED BY
SCOTT FEINBERG
Senior Awards Analyst

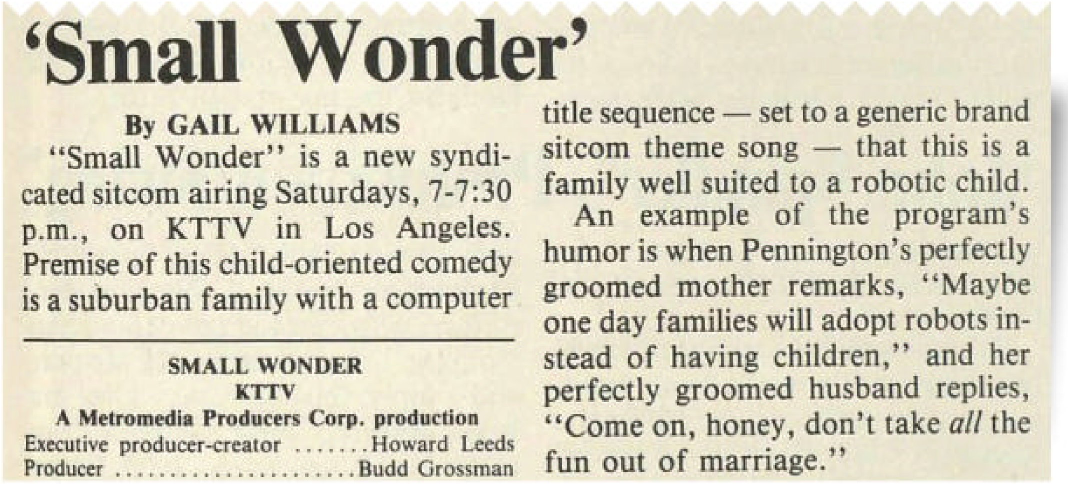
LISTEN WHEREVER PODCASTS ARE HEARD

The Hollywood Reporter

1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 **1985** 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995

In 1985, *Small Wonder's* Robot Girl Wreaked Havoc

M3GAN, the new Blumhouse flick about a homicidal robot doll (in theaters Jan. 6), is not Hollywood's first foray into little-girl AI. A campy '80s sitcom called *Small Wonder* followed the exploits of Vicki — an acronym for Voice Input Child Identicant — who was a child android played by Tiffany Brissette, then 10. The show was created by the late Howard Leeds, who wrote on *Bewitched* and *The Brady Bunch*. Leeds had also written on *My Living Doll*, a short-lived sitcom from 1964 starring Julie Newmar as a robot woman. He borrowed that premise for *Small Wonder*, which debuted in syndication on Sept. 10, 1985. (It aired on the newly launched Fox network from 1986 until its cancellation in 1989, then lived on in reruns.) After a nationwide search for the role of Vicki, producers "just loved Tiffany," says Dick Christie, who played her inventor dad, Ted Lawson, "because she could pull off that monotone for the first three seasons." (By season four, Brissette was permitted to speak more naturally, while her growth spurt was explained as being a "system upgrade.") Beneath her signature red-and-white dress was a circuitry board on her back. "They had guys who were well-versed in the electrical boards of the time," recalls Christie. "They could make them flash and beep." The humor of the show, geared at young audiences, relied on gags involving Vicki taking language too literally (she throws salad across the room when asked to "toss the salad") and duping the nosy neighbors who suspect she might not be human (Edie McClurg played the mom next door in the first two seasons). Among the guest stars were wrestler/future Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura and late NFL defensive lineman Lyle Alzado. Christie, now 75 and in his ninth year on CBS' *The Bold and the Beautiful*, thinks *Small Wonder* endures because of its fantastical premise: "Think about it — you're 9 years old and you're given a robot for a sister that will do anything you want. 'Make the bed.' 'Set the table.' 'Do my homework.' Kids loved that." — SETH ABRAMOVITCH



'Small Wonder'

By GAIL WILLIAMS

"Small Wonder" is a new syndicated sitcom airing Saturdays, 7-7:30 p.m., on KTTV in Los Angeles. Premise of this child-oriented comedy is a suburban family with a computer title sequence — set to a generic brand sitcom theme song — that this is a family well suited to a robotic child.

An example of the program's humor is when Pennington's perfectly groomed mother remarks, "Maybe one day families will adopt robots instead of having children," and her perfectly groomed husband replies, "Come on, honey, don't take *all* the fun out of marriage."

SMALL WONDER
KTTV
A Metromedia Producers Corp. production
Executive producer-creator ....Howard Leeds
Producer ....Budd Grossman

From left: Jerry Supiran as Jamie, Tiffany Brissette as his robot sister, Vicki, and Emily Schulman as neighbor Harriet on *Small Wonder*.

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STEVEN SPIELBERG p.g.a. **TONY KUSHNER** p.g.a.

BEST DIRECTOR

STEVEN SPIELBERG

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Written By
STEVEN SPIELBERG & TONY KUSHNER

BEST ACTRESS

MICHELLE WILLIAMS

BEST ACTOR

GABRIEL LABELLE

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PAUL DANO • SETH ROGEN • JUDD HIRSCH

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Production Designer **RICK CARTER**
Set Decorator **KAREN O'HARA**

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25
26
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IT’S ONE MAN’S THANK YOU TO THE MOVIES FOR SAVING HIM. AND IT’S A GREAT AMERICAN ARTIST UTILIZING HIS SKILL AS A GREAT STORYTELLER TO FINALLY TELL HIS OWN. ONE OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE, ENLIGHTENING, VITAL THINGS SPIELBERG HAS EVER DONE.”

TIME

THE BEST FILM OF THE YEAR

DIRECTED BY STEVEN SPIELBERG

THE FABELMANS

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